The Basket of Flowers.

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THE

BASKET OF FLOWERS.

[Christoph von Schmid]

THE

BASKET OF FLOWERS;

OR,

PIETY AND TRUTH TRIUMPHANT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN EDITION.

With Numerous Coloured Illustrations.

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PREFACE.

THERE have been many editions of this popular work, all of which have been received with favour by the public. The original story is from the pen of a German writer. Some of the English editions have been American translations, and some (English) translations from the French edition of the original work. Some of these have been added to, and others curtailed, according to the tastes or fancies of the various translators and publishers.

So far as we can ascertain, there is yet no

English translation of the German original, without alterations and additions by French, American, and English writers.

The following volume is translated from the German story, almost literally, except that here and there a few verses from the best English poets are given at the close of the chapters, where they are peculiarly suitable to the subject, and a few striking emblems and verses from natural objects, or from Scripture, have been added where it seemed necessary to do so. But, on the whole, this edition will be found a much more faithful translation of the original book than any other yet published.

It seems almost unnecessary to remind the reader, that various events in the following story

may appear strange and improbable to English readers, because the scenes described took place at a time and in a country very different from their own.

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THE BASKET OF FLOWERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

IN the market-town of Eichburg in Germany, belonging to a Count of this name, there lived, above one hundred years ago, a sensible and pious man of the name of

James Rode. When he was a poor lad, he came to Eichburg to be under-gardener, and to acquire a knowledge of horticulture, in the gardens of the Count's castle. The excellent qualities of his mind, the skill he displayed in everything that he undertook, and his prepossessing appearance, bearing the impress of nature's nobility, gained him the favour of his master and mistress, who employed him in various subordinate offices in the castle.

When the Count, who at this time was a young man, went on his travels, James accompanied him as one of his retinue. In the course of these travels, James made diligent use of the means of improvement afforded him. He learned much, gained a knowledge of the usages of society, acquired elegant language and refined manners, but what is still better, he brought back with him his noble honest heart, uncorrupted by his intercourse with the great world. The Count sought to reward James's faithful services by giving him a profitable situation; James might have been made steward in a palace which belonged to the Count in the capital; but the good man looked back with pleasure to the tranquillity of a country life; and as, just at this time, a small farm that had hitherto been let on lease happened to be at the disposal of the Count, James requested to be allowed to rent it. The generous Count permitted him to have it for life,

without paying any rent, and also gave him every year as much grain and wood as sufficed to supply his household.

James soon afterwards married, and supported himself and his family upon the produce and profits of this little farm, that besides a nice house had a large, fine garden, half of which was planted with the best sorts of fruit-trees, and the other half was used for the cultivation of vegetables and flowers.

After James had lived for many years happily with his wife, who in all respects was worthy of him, she was snatched away by the hand of death. His grief was inexpressible. The good man, already somewhat advanced in years, seemed to become prematurely aged, his form was bent, and his hair turned grey. His sole comfort in the world was his daughter, the only survivor of several children, who, at the death of her mother, was but five years old. She was named Mary, after her mother, and was her very image.

Even when a child, little Mary was exceedingly beautiful, and as she grew up, her pious mind, her gentleness, modesty, and the unselfish kindness that she showed to every one, gave a peculiar grace to her beauty, and endeared her more and more to her father's heart.

"How like a new existence to his heart,
Uprose that living flower beneath his eye!

Dear as she was, from cherub infancy,
From hours when she would round his garden play,
To time when, as the ripening years went by,
Her lovely mind could culture well repay,
And more engaging grew from pleasing day to day."

There was so amiable an expression in her countenance, that all who saw her loved her. Reared in a good and happy home, she grew up a gentle, pious girl, loving flowers and all the beauties of nature, and seeing the hand of God in all his glorious works.

Mary was not quite fifteen, when she was required to manage the affairs of her father's little household, which she did to perfection. A speck of dust was never to be seen in the neat sitting-room; in the kitchen, the cooking utensils and other articles were almost as bright as new; and the whole house was a pattern of order and cleanliness. With unwearied industry Mary assisted her father to work in the garden; and the time she thus spent in helping him was the happiest in her life, for her wise father knew how to make labour a pleasure by means of cheerful and instructive conversation.

Thus Mary grew among the flowers, and the garden was her world. From childhood she had taken great pleasure in rare and lovely plants, therefore her father every year sent for seeds, roots, and grafts, of sorts that she had never before seen, and he allowed her to plant

the borders of the beds in the garden with what she liked best.

Mary had thus a constant and pleasant occupation during her hours of leisure. She carefully tended the delicate plants, watched the blossoms that were new to her, wondering what kind of flowers they would produce. She could scarcely wait until the buds opened, and when at length the long-looked-for flowers appeared in their beauty, the sight gave her inexpressible joy. "This is pure innocent pleasure," said her father, smiling. "Many people expend more money for gay dresses for their children than I spend in flower-seeds, and yet they do not procure so pleasant and harmless an enjoyment for their daughters."

Every month, and even every week, Mary found new sources of amusement in her garden. She often said with delight, "Paradise could scarcely have been more beautiful than our garden." Few passed by without stopping to admire the rare blossoms. The children of the village on their way from school peeped through the fence with longing eyes, and Mary often gratified them by giving them a few flowers.

The wise father knew how to make a still nobler use of his daughter's delight in flowers. He taught her to see the wisdom, goodness, and almighty power of God in the beauty of the blossoms, the variety of their forms,

the distinctness of their varied features, their exact proportions, their splendid colouring, and their delicious perfume. He was accustomed to spend the first morning hour of each day in devotion, and he always rose early in order to be able to do this before he went to work. He thought that there was little worth having in human life, if, amidst his business, a man could not secure a few hours for devotion, or at least could not command half an hour in a day, in which he could commune undisturbed with his Maker, and elevate his mind by raising his thoughts to heaven. In the beautiful days of spring and summer he took Mary with him to shady spots in the garden, from which, amidst the lovely songs of birds, and the blossoms besprinkled with dew, they could see an extensive view, bounded by the golden rays of the rising sun.

Here James communed with God, who created the sun to shine with friendly light and heat, who gives us dew and rain, who bounteously feeds the fowls of heaven, and richly clothes the flowers of the field. Here they learned to know the Almighty as the loving Father of the human race, who is gracious to all, whose tender mercies are over all his works, and whose love is shown more clearly than in all besides, by the gift of his only and well-beloved Son. "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." James taught Mary to pray to this loving Saviour as he himself prayed, with his whole heart. The devotions of the morning hour bore much fruit, and tended to implant child-like piety in Mary's youthful heart.

From the lovely flowers her father taught her to draw sublime lessons of heavenly wisdom. One day in early spring, when Mary joyfully brought him the first violet that she had gathered, her father said,—"Dear Mary, this lovely flower is an emblem of humility, modesty, and unobtrusive benevolence. It is robed in celestial blue, but grows close to the ground; it hides itself in the shade, but fills the air with the sweetest perfume. It is the emblem of a meek and lowly heart, which wears the genuine blue of heaven, and is made like unto our Lord, who was meek and lowly. While it retires from the world and thinks little of itself, it is precious in the sight of God; 'for He hath respect unto the lowly.' (Ps. cxxxviii. 6.) Be thou, dear Mary, humble and retiring like the modest violet. Do not desire to be gaily dressed like a gaudy flower. Remember our Lord's warning, 'Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them.' Seek not the applause of men, but act from a nobler motive. Let it be your earnest desire to live for God's glory, and let that be your aim in all that you do."

When the garden was in its greatest beauty, and the flowers were in full bloom, James pointed to a splendid lily, on which the rays of the sun were shining, and thus spoke to the delighted Mary:—

"This fair lily is the emblem of innocence; white is always used to denote purity; and see, its blossoms are white as new-fallen snow. But white is more difficult to keep clean than any other colour; the least touch of impurity destroys it. Alas! none of us are by nature pure in heart, yet there is a fountain wherein we may wash and be clean. There is a white robe freely offered to all. Blessed are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' Pray for this purity, dear Mary, and avoid the least contact with evil. Go not in the way of sinners; listen not to their words. Remember, that a word, or even a thought, may soil the purity of the mind.

"The rose," continued James, "is the emblem of modesty. Lovelier than the rose is the colour that flushes the cheek of a modest girl. The face that is never tinged with a blush is the sign of a heart that has been soiled by the world."

James gathered a bunch of roses and lilies, and made them into a beautiful bouquet. Then giving it to Mary, he said—

"The rose and the lily, emblems of purity and modesty, are twin sisters that should never be separated. God gave modesty to purity to be a warning when evil is near. Fly from all, dear Mary, that can call up a blush to your cheek. Avoid even the appearance of evil. May your heart be pure as the lily, and your cheek as red as the rose. Lovely as these roses are, they will fade and wither; but even when their leaves are brown and dry, the sweet scent will remain. The rose on your cheek may fade, dear Mary; outward beauty may pass away; but true purity of heart will endure for ever, and the beauty of the mind can never decay."

The most beautiful ornament of the garden was a dwarf apple-tree, not higher than a rose-bush, that stood in a small circular bed in the middle of the garden. Mary's father had planted it on the day in which she was born, and the tree now bore every year golden, rosy-cheeked apples. One season it flowered particularly well, and was completely covered with blossoms. Mary went to look at it every morning.

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed she, in an ecstacy of delight. "What exquisite red and white! The tree looks like one large bunch of flowers!"

One morning, when she went to look at it as usual, it was withered; the frost had destroyed all its blossoms;

they were already yellow, brown, and shrivelled, and Mary wept at the sad sight.

"So is the bloom of youth destroyed by sinful pleasures," observed Mary's father; "like the nipping frost, they blast and wither the fairest and most promising. Oh! my dear Mary, keep far from the polluting pleasures of the world. Tremble even to taste them. Oh, my child! beware of them; venture not near the forbidden path; pray to be kept from evil. If the fair hopes that I have of your bright future, not for one year only, but for your whole life, should be thus blasted, I would then weep more bitter tears than you are now shedding. I should never again have a happy hour, and my grey hairs would go down in sorrow to the grave."

Tears stood in James's eyes as he spoke, and his words made a very deep impression on Mary.

Brought up under the care of so wise and loving a father, Mary grew up amongst the flowers of their garden as blooming as a rose, pure-minded as a lily, modest as a violet, and with as bright hopes as a young tree when in fairest blossom.

The old man had always contemplated with happy smiles his favourite garden, the fruits of which so well rewarded his industry; but he looked with far greater pleasure on his sweet and gentle daughter, who, by the blessing of God on his labours, rewarded the care he had

bestowed on training and teaching her, by bringing forth still more precious fruits, even the fruits of the Spirit, to the praise and glory of God.

"Domestic Love! not in proud palace halls
Is often seen thy beauty to abide;
Thy dwelling is in lonely cottage walls,
That in the thickets of the woodbine hide,
With hum of bees around, and from the side
Of woody hills some little bubbling spring,
Shining along through banks with harebell dyed;
And many a bird to warble on the wing,
When morn her saffron robe o'er heaven and earth doth fling."

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT OF MAY FLOWERS.

ON a lovely morning in the beginning of the month of May, Mary went into a neighbouring grove, and cut some twigs of willow and boughs of hazel, with which her father, when he was not occupied in his garden, made very pretty baskets. There she found the first lilies of

the valley in blossom. She gathered some of them, and made two nosegays—one for her father, and another for herself. As she was passing along a narrow footpath across a flowery meadow, on her way home, she was met by the Countess of Eichburg and her daughter Amelia, who usually lived in the city, but who were now spending a few days in their castle at Eichburg.

As soon as Mary perceived the two ladies in white dresses, and with green parasols, then not used by the peasants, she stepped aside to make room for them to pass, and stood respectfully waiting beside the footpath.

"What! are there lilies of the valley already in flower?" exclaimed the young Countess, whose favourite flower it was.

Mary immediately offered a bunch of lilies to each of the ladies. They accepted them with pleasure; and the Countess drew out her purse of purple and gold, and wished to make Mary a present. But Mary said, "Will not your Excellency permit a poor girl, who has already received so many benefits from your ladyship, to enjoy the pleasure of giving a few flowers without thinking of reward?"

The Countess smiled kindly, and said that Mary might often bring Amelia a bunch of lilies of the valley.

Mary did this every morning, and, so long as the lilies of the valley lasted, went daily to the castle. Amelia

found greater pleasure every day in Mary's visits, on account of her naturally good understanding, her merry disposition and artlessness, and her increasing popularity. Mary was obliged to spend many hours in the society of the Lady Amelia, long after all the May flowers had faded away. The young Countess often showed that she wished Mary to be always with her, and she therefore thought of giving her a place in the household of the Count, so that she might have her constantly near her.

The anniversary of Amelia's birthday was drawing near. Mary was busied with a little rustic present for the occasion. She had often before given a wreath of flowers; she now decided on giving something else. During the previous winter her father had occupied himself in making beautiful work-baskets for ladies. He had given the most beautiful of them all to Mary. He had obtained the pattern of this in the city, and had succeeded remarkably well in making it an exquisite piece of workmanship. Mary resolved to fill this basket with flowers, and to offer it as a gift to Amelia, on the anniversary of her birthday. Her father gladly granted her request, and he still more adorned the pretty little basket by weaving on it in delicate workmanship the name of the Countess Amelia and the crest of her family. When finished, the basket was quite a masterpiece.

On the morning of the Countess Amelia's birthday,

Mary gathered the loveliest roses, the most beautiful white, crimson, and purple stocks, dark brown and yellow wall-flowers, dark red, yellow, and clove carnations, and other exquisite flowers of all colours. She arranged these in the basket, amongst elegant sprigs of green, with correct taste, so that the colours contrasted well with one another. She surrounded the edge of the basket with a light wreath of rosebuds and moss, and she encircled the Countess Amelia's name with a garland of forget-me-not. The fresh rosebuds, the tender green moss, and the blue forget-me-not looked beautiful on the white lattice-work of the basket. The whole looked so perfect, that even her grave father praised Mary's good taste with a complacent smile, and said, when she wished to take it away, "Let it stand there a little longer, that I may have the pleasure of looking at it."

Mary carried the basket to the castle, and presented it to the Countess Amelia, with her most respectful good wishes. Mary found the young Countess seated at her toilet. Her maid was standing behind her, dressing her hair for the festival. The Countess Amelia was delighted with the basket, and could not say enough in praise of the exquisite workmanship of the gift and the beauty of the flowers.

"You good child!" said she; "you must have quite stripped your garden, to bring me so lovely a gift! And

your father's work is so beautiful, so tasteful! I have never seen anything more exquisite. Oh, come with me, and let me show it to my mother!"

She arose, took Mary kindly by the hand, and led her upstairs to her mother's room.

"Oh, look, mamma!" exclaimed she, as she entered the room, "what a lovely and inimitable present Mary has brought me! I have never seen a prettier basket, and there could not be more beautiful flowers."

The Countess also was much pleased with the basket. "It is indeed very beautiful," said she; "I should like to have a picture of it. The basket with the flowers still wet with the morning dew, would make as fine a flower-piece as has ever been painted by the great masters. It does great credit to Mary's good taste, and still more honour to her kind heart. Wait here a little, dear child," continued she to Mary, beckoning at the same time to Amelia to follow her into the next room. Then she said to her daughter, "We must not allow Mary to go home without a present. What do you think it will be best to give her?"

Amelia considered for a few moments. "I think," said she, at length, "one of my dresses might be the best thing; at least, dearest mother, if you will allow me to give her the dress which has small red and white flowers on a dark green ground. It is as good as new; I have only

worn it once or twice, but I have outgrown it. It would be a pretty Sunday dress for Mary. She is so neat-handed, that she will alter it herself to make it fit her. If you do not think it too much, I will give it to her."

"Do so," said the Countess; "when we give anything to the working people, it ought always to be something useful and suitable. The green dress with the pattern of flowers will be an appropriate gift to the little flower-girl."

The Countess went back to the room in which she had left Mary. "Go now, children," said she, kindly, "and take care of these flowers, that they may not fade before dinner-time. We have company to-day, and the basket shall take the place of the epergne, and be the chief ornament of the dinner-table. I leave it to you, dear Amelia, to thank Mary for it."

Amelia hastened back to her own room with Mary, and desired her maid to bring the dress. Harriet (for this was the maid's name) stood hesitating, and said—"Your ladyship cannot surely intend to wear that dress to-day?"

"No," replied Amelia, "I mean to give it to Mary."

"That dress!" returned Harriet, sharply. "Is her ladyship the Countess aware of it?"

"Bring the dress here," said Amelia, in a decided tone, "and leave me to settle the rest."

Harriet turned hastily away to hide her vexation, and went with a countenance flushed with rage. She angrily pulled the dress out of the wardrobe of the young Countess. "Oh, if I only dared to tear it to pieces!" said she—"that detestable gardener's girl! She has already partly taken my place in the favour of my mistress, and now she is robbing me of this dress; for the cast-off dresses of my lady belong to me by right. I could tear out the eyes of this hateful flower-seller!" Notwithstanding, Harriet suppressed her anger as well as she could, and put on a civil expression when she returned to the room, and gave the dress to Amelia.

"Dear Mary," said Amelia, "I have received many more costly presents to-day, but not any that have pleased me so much as the flower-basket. The flowers in this dress are not so beautiful as yours, but I think that you will like them as my gift. Wear this dress as a remembrance of me, and give my best thanks to your father."

Mary took the dress, kissed the hand of the young Countess, and took her leave.

Harriet continued her work in silence, with feelings of jealousy, envy, and anger burning in her heart. It cost her no little self-command to conceal her ill-temper, and she could not refrain from slightly showing it by pulling Amelia's hair a little while she was dressing it.

"Are you angry, Harriet?" said Amelia, gently.

"I should be too foolish were I to be angry because your ladyship is so kind."

"That is a very sensible speech," said the Lady Amelia. "I wish that you may always think as sensibly."

Meantime Mary hastened home with the beautiful dress, her heart full of joy. But her prudent father was not particularly pleased with the elegant present. He shook his grey head, and said—"I had rather that you had not carried that basket to the castle. I value the dress, indeed, as the gift of our kind ladies, but I fear that it may make other people envious of us, and what would be much worse, that it may make you vain. Take good care, dear Mary, that the last may not, at all events, be the case. Modesty and proper behaviour are better ornaments for a girl than the most beautiful and becoming dresses. Remember what the Bible tells us about the best ornaments of a woman. 'Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves.'" (1 Peter iii. 3—5.)

"We sacrifice to dress, till household joys
And comforts cease. Dress drains our cellar dry,
And keeps our larder lean; puts out our fires,
And introduces hunger, frost, and woe,
Where peace and hospitality might reign."

COWPER.

"A sweet temper, and an open heart,
A loving breast, and animated eye—
These, these best dignify, and still endear
The meanest and the lowest. Many round
May overtop me with their pride and show,
But let me be what they but seem to be,
And seem, and be, the best. In my small sphere
Perfume the atmosphere around my path
With kind sweet words and loving happy looks.
If I am loving I shall be beloved;
And men shall bless the fragrance of my name,
And hail my presence and my absence mourn."

PARTRIDGE.

"The pompous flowers but dazzle, not delight,
Astonish while their worthier mates attract,
Admired by many, but by none beloved.
Fine features, symmetry, a large estate,
Taste, wit, and genius, admiration win."

PARTRIDGE.

CHAPTER III.

THE STOLEN RING.

MARY tried on her new dress; she then folded it up carefully, and put it away in her box. Scarcely had she done this, when the young Countess hastily entered the cottage, pale, trembling, and out of breath.

"Oh, Mary!" exclaimed she, "what have you done?

My mother's diamond ring is missing! No one has been in the room but you. Do give it to me quickly, or it will be a dreadful business. Give it me quickly, and then the matter may still be arranged."

Mary was so terrified that she became as pale as death. "Ah, my lady," said she, "what can this mean? I have not the ring. I did not even see a ring in the room. I never even left the place in which I stood."

"Mary," pleaded the Countess, "I entreat you, for your own sake, to give me the ring. You know not how valuable the one precious stone in it is. The ring cost nearly a thousand crowns. If you had known that, you would surely not have taken it. Probably you thought it only a trifle of little value. But do give it to me now, and all shall be forgiven you, as merely an act of youthful folly."

Mary began to weep. "Indeed, indeed," said she, "I know nothing about the ring. I have never even ventured to touch anything that did not belong to me, far less to steal it. My father has trained me too well ever to take anything from anyone."

The father now entered the room. He had been working in the garden, and had seen the young Countess enter the house, apparently in great haste. When he was told why she had come, he exclaimed, apparently in great distress, "What is this?" The good man was so agitated,

that he was forced to catch hold of the table for support, and sank, half fainting, upon a bench.

"Child," said he, "to steal such a ring as this is a crime which, in this country, is punished with death. But this is the least part of it. For such a deed we have to answer not only to man, but to a far greater Lord—to the highest Judge of all, who sees the secrets of all hearts, and before whom no excuses or refuges of lies avail. If you have so forgotten God's holy commands, and in the moment of temptation have not remembered my fatherly teachings; if you have suffered your eyes to be dazzled by the splendour of gold and precious stones, and have thus been led into sin, oh! deny it not, but confess it, and give back the ring. This is the only way to make amends for your guilt, and perhaps it may still be forgiven."

"Oh, father," said Mary, amidst tears and sobs, "I assure you—I assure you—indeed, I saw nothing of the ring. Ah! if I had even found such a ring in the street, I could not have rested until I had restored it to its owner."

"See," continued her father, "that angel, the young Countess Amelia, who has come here out of love to you, to save you from the hands of justice—who wishes you so well—who has just given you so valuable a present—surely she does not deserve that you should tell her a lie

—that you should seek to deceive her to your own destruction! If you have the ring, confess it at once, and the gracious Countess will, perhaps, by her entreaties, avert from you the punishment you deserve. Mary, I entreat you, be honest, and tell the truth."

"Father," said Mary, "you know well that I have never stolen the value of a farthing in my whole life! I have never even ventured to take an apple from a tree, or a handful of grass from the meadow of a neighbour; how much less could I have taken anything so precious. Believe me, dearest father; you know that I have never told you a lie in my life!"

"Mary," said her father, once more, "look with pity upon my grey hairs! Bring them not with sorrow to the grave! Spare me this deep agony! Confess it before God, before whom I hope soon to appear, and who will permit no thief to enter into the kingdom of heaven. As in his sight, I ask you again, have you the ring? For your own soul's sake I implore you to tell the truth!"

Mary looked with weeping eyes to heaven, clasped her hands, and said solemnly, "God knows that I have not the ring! As surely as I hope to be saved, so surely I have it not!"

"Now," said her father, "I do truly believe that you have it not, for you could not tell such a falsehood in the very presence of God, before the noble Countess here,

and your own old father. And as I now firmly believe you to be innocent, I am easy. Be at peace, too, dear Mary, and fear nothing. There is but one real evil in the world that we have to fear, and that is sin. Prison and death are nothing to this. Whatever may become of us, even if all men should forsake us, and be against us, yet we have God for our friend, and He will certainly rescue us, and sooner or later bring our innocence to light."

The young Countess wiped away a tear, as she said, "Good people, when I hear you speak thus, I really believe, too, that you have not the ring. But again, when I consider all the circumstances, it seems to me next to impossible that you should not have it. My mother distinctly remembers the very place on her work-table on which she put down the ring before I went into her room with Mary. No one else entered the room. Mary herself can testify that I did not even go near the work-table. While my mother and I were speaking together in the next room, Mary was left alone—before and after this there was no one else there. After we had gone, my mother closed the door to change her dress. As soon as she had dressed, and wished to put on the ring again, she found it gone. My mother herself searched the whole room for it. She took the precaution not to ring for any of the servants, and did not allow even me to enter the

room till she had thoroughly searched it two or three times. But all was in vain! Who, then, can have the ring?"

"That I do not understand," said Mary's father. "God has appointed a severe trial for us. Yet, whatever may be hanging over us," continued he, looking upwards to heaven, "see, Lord, here am I! Thy will be done! Only give me thy grace, O God, and it is sufficient for me!"

"Indeed, I shall go home with a heavy heart," said the Countess. "It is a melancholy birthday to me! It will be a terrible affair. My mother has not yet said a word about it to anyone but me, in order not to injure Mary. But the matter cannot be concealed much longer. My mother must wear the ring to-day. We expect my father about midday from the capital, and if the ring is not on her finger, he will immediately miss it, for it was his gift to her when I was born, and she has always worn it on my birthday. She is hoping and expecting that I shall bring it back with me!"

There was a silence for a few minutes, then Amelia said, sorrowfully, "Farewell! I shall, indeed, assure them all that I believe you to be innocent; but—will they believe me?"

She went mournfully to the door, with tears in her eyes. Both father and daughter were so stunned with grief, that

they did not move to open it, or to accompany her on her way.

The father sat upon the bench, with his head leaning upon his hand, looking on the ground as if lost in thought, while tears flowed down his pale cheeks. Mary fell on her knees before him, looked up into his face, weeping bitterly, and said—

"Oh, father, indeed I am innocent of the whole matter; I assure you that I am innocent."

Her father raised her kindly, looked long and earnestly into her blue eyes, and then said—"Yes, Mary, you are innocent. Guilt could never wear so honest and so truthful a look."

"Oh, father," continued Mary, "what will be the end of this? What will become of us? Oh, if I alone were to suffer, I would bear it willingly; but that you, dearest father, should suffer on my account, is more terrible to me than all the rest."

"Trust in God," replied her father, "and be undismayed. Without his permission not a hair of our heads can be touched. Whatever may happen, it is all ordered by God. It is, therefore, all right, and for our good, and what would we have more? Do not, then, be terrified, and always keep strictly to the truth. However they may threaten you, whatever they may promise you, do not deviate a hair's breadth from the truth, and wound not your own

conscience. A good conscience is a soft pillow, even in a prison. We may now possibly be separated from each other, your father will no longer be able to comfort you, dear Mary! But cling the more closely and trustfully to your Father in heaven. None can separate you from Him, your Almighty Protector!"

The door was then suddenly thrown open, and the officers of justice entered the room. Mary uttered a loud cry, and threw her arms round her father.

"Separate them!" said the chief officer, his eyes flashing with anger. "Put the daughter in irons, and take her to prison. The father also must be held in custody, at least for a time. Let the house and garden be well watched, and let no one enter till we have searched it thoroughly."

Mary still clung to her father, but the officers of justice tore her from him by force, and put her in irons. She fainted, and was carried away unconscious. As the father and daughter were taken through the streets, a crowd of people collected. The story of the ring had spread like wildfire through the whole of the neighbourhood. The crowd rushed round the gardener's cottage, as if the building were on fire. The most conflicting opinions were expressed. Kind as James and Mary had ever been to all their neighbours, yet people were found that rejoiced in their fall, and made the most malicious remarks on

that which had happened. As James and Mary had prospered well through their own industry and frugality, they had been envied by many less industrious.

"It is easy to see," said they, "where their wealth has come from. Before this we could not understand it; but now it is not difficult to see why they lived better and dressed better than any of the other people in the place."

However, most of the inhabitants of Eichburg truly sympathized with honest James and his good daughter. Many of the good townspeople thus spoke to each other: "Alas! what wretched creatures we poor human beings are! the best of us are not secure from falling. Who would have thought it of these worthy people? Yet, perhaps, they are not guilty, and if so, may God bring their innocence to light! But, even if they have done it, may God help them, that they may confess their sin and amend, and escape the great miseries that threaten them. May God in his mercy guard us all from sin, for without his help we are not safe for a single day."

Many of the children of the place gathered in groups, and stood weeping as Mary and her father passed. "Ah!" said they, "if these good people are put in prison, honest James will give us no more fruit, and kind Mary no more flowers. It is wrong to put them in prison, and it ought not to be done."

"Child of sorrow, hush thy wailing;
One there is who knows thy grief,
One whose mercy, never failing,
Waits to give thy soul relief;
He, thy Saviour,
Faithful still, of friends the chief.

"Child of sorrow, do they leave thee,
Those on whom thy hopes have stayed?
Jesus calls, and will receive thee,
With a love can never fade;
Hark! He bids thee
Seek the home for sinners made."

P. HUTTON.

CHAPTER IV.

MARY IN PRISON.

MARY had been dragged to prison while still almost unconscious. When left alone in her dungeon, she came to herself by slow degrees, and as she remembered her misery, she wept, sobbed, wrung her hands, and then recollecting where alone she could find comfort, she prayed

earnestly, till at length she fell asleep exhausted, upon her bed of straw. Soft sleep closed her weary eyelids. When she again awoke, it was night. All around her was dark, and she could see nothing. At first she knew not where she was. The story of the ring came to her memory like a dream. For a moment she fancied that she was in her own bed at home. She was just beginning to rejoice that her sad dream had been chased away by her awakening, when she felt the weight of her fetters, and their dismal clang awoke her to the fearful reality. She started terrified from her hard bed.

"Oh! what can I do," exclaimed she, as she sank on her knees, "but raise these fettered hands to Thee, O gracious God? Oh, deign to look into this prison, and behold me on my knees before Thee! Thou knowest that I am innocent! Thou art the refuge of the innocent! Save me! Have pity on me! Pity my poor father! Oh, give him comfort, and rather let me suffer double sorrow!"

A torrent of tears flowed from her eyes, as she thought of her father. Sobs choked her voice, and she wept long in silence.

The moon, which had long been hidden in the clouds, now suddenly shone out in full splendour, and threw the shadow of the grated window on the floor of Mary's dungeon. In its clear light, Mary could now see the four walls of her prison—the rough stones of which it was

built—the white lines that marked where they were joined together—the stone which, in one corner, served for a table—the earthen pitcher and earthen plate which stood on it, and the wretched bundle of straw, which served her for a bed. Yet, as soon as the thick darkness had passed away, Mary felt lighter at heart; the bright moon seemed to her like an old friend.

"Do you come, lovely Moon," said she "to look again upon me, who have loved you so much? Oh! when you shone into my room, through the quivering vine-leaves, how much more beautiful you seemed than now, when your rays beam through the dark grating of my prison window! Are you mourning with me? Ah! I never believed I should see you thus! What is my father doing now? Is he waking, and looking on you, and mourning as I am? Ah! that I could see him but for a moment! Lovely Moon, you are shining on him now! Oh, could you but speak, you might tell him how Mary is weeping and mourning for his sorrow.

"But how foolishly I have been speaking in my misery. Forgive me, O merciful God, for these idle words! Thou seest me. Thou seest my poor father. Thou seest into both our hearts. Thy Almighty power can help us, through prison walls and iron bars! None can withstand Thee! Oh, send comfort to my father in his sorrow!"

Mary was now surprised to perceive a pleasant perfume in her prison. In the morning she had gathered some half-open rosebuds, and other flowers; she had made them into a little nosegay, and put them in her breast. The sweet perfume came from these flowers.

"Are you there still, you dear little blossoms?" said she, as she saw her nosegay, "and have you come with me to prison, you innocent creatures? You have not deserved punishment, and it is my comfort that I deserve it as little as you do."

She took the nosegay from her breast, and looked at it in the moonlight. "Ah!" said she, "when I gathered these rosebuds this morning in my garden, and plucked these forget-me-nots from the brook, who would have believed that I should be in prison to-night? When I fastened the wreath of flowers round the edge of the basket, who could have thought that to-night iron fetters would be fastened round my wrists? So changeable are all things on earth, no one knows how speedily his position may be altered, or to what melancholy events the most innocent actions may lead. Truly all human beings have good reason to commend themselves, every morning, to the protection of God."

Again she wept; her tears dropped on the rosebuds and forget-me-nots, and glittered in the moonlight like dew. "He who forgets not the flowers, but refreshes

them with rain and dew, will not forget me," said she. "Oh, most gracious God, send comfort into my heart, and into the heart of my poor father, as Thou fillest the cups of the thirsty flowers with the dew of heaven."

Amid her tears, she thought again of her father. "Oh, my kind father!" said she, "when I look at this wreath, how many of your words about the flowers come back to my mind. These rosebuds have bloomed among thorns; so may joy spring up amid my sorrows. Whoever would have tried to unfold this rosebud before its time, would have destroyed it. God, who created it, has ordered that its tender leaves should unfold themselves one by one, and should breathe forth their delicious perfume. Thus will He overrule my sufferings, so as to develope the blessings that are sent to me in them. Therefore will I patiently wait till his time come. These forget-me-nots remind me of their Creator. Ah, gracious God, I will not forget Thee, as Thou hast not forgotten me! These delicate flowers are blue as the sky above us. May heaven be my comfort amid all earthly sorrows. Here are some odoriferous sweet-peas, with their delicate red and white blossoms! As this tender plant clings to the support upon which it leans, and so climbs joyfully upwards, so may I, borne upwards from earth as if on wings, rise unto Thee, O God, and clinging to Thee, rise above all earthly

sorrows. It is this mignonette which, more than all the rest, diffuses its delicious perfume in my prison. Lovely, gentle flower! thou rejoicest even her whose hand plucked thee. I will try to be like thee, and strive to feel kindly to those who have torn me from my home and cast me into prison, when I had done them no harm. Here is a fresh sprig of periwinkle. This is green even in winter, and in the most dreary season of the year keeps the lovely colour of hope. Even now, in my time of suffering, I will not give up hope. My God, who can preserve this little plant fresh and green amid the storms of winter, under ice and snow, will also preserve me amid the storms of misfortune. Here are some laurel leaves. They remind me of the unfading wreath prepared in heaven for those who suffer heroically and patiently on earth. Oh, I imagine I can see it now, this evergreen wreath of victory, this glorious golden crown! Flowers of earth, you are passing like its joys, withering and fading away. But after the brief sorrows of earth, there awaits us in heaven above, a glory and blessedness which is eternal and unchangeable."

A dark cloud now suddenly obscured the moon. Mary could no longer see her flowers, and her cell became fearfully dark. Again her heart sank within her. But the cloud soon passed away, and the moon again shone out in all her beauty. "Thus," said Mary to herself, "may

innocence be under a cloud for a time, but at length it shines forth again clear and bright. Thus, O my God, wilt Thou at last make manifest my innocence, and clear it from all false accusations, though now it is hidden by the dark clouds of suspicion."

Soothed by these thoughts, Mary knelt in prayer, and then lay down peacefully to sleep on her bed of straw. A pleasant dream comforted her during her slumbers. She thought she was walking in the moonlight in a garden she had never seen before. It was surpassingly beautiful, too lovely for words to describe, and it appeared to be surrounded by a wilderness in a gloomy forest of fir-trees. She had never seen the moon so bright and lovely as it appeared in her dream. All the flowers in the garden seemed to bloom more beautifully in the soft moonlight. Her father, too, appeared to her in this marvellous garden. The moonbeams shone on his cheerful, honest, smiling face. In fancy she rushed towards him, and throwing herself upon his neck, shed tears of joy, with which her cheeks were still wet when she awoke.

"Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
  Along the Psalmist's music deep—
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this,
 'He giveth his beloved sleep.'

"What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart to be unmoved—
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep—
The senate's shout to patriot vows—
The monarch's crown to light the brows?—
'He giveth his beloved sleep.'

"'Sleep soft, beloved,' we sometimes say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumbers when
'He giveth his beloved sleep.'

"He! men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man,
In such a rest his heart to keep;
But angels say—and through the word,
I ween their blessed smile is *heard*—
'He giveth his beloved sleep.'"

E. B. BARRETT.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRIAL.

SCARCELY had Mary awoke, when an officer of justice came to the prison to take her before the Court. A cold shudder came over her as she entered the dark gloomy room, of which the vaulted roof and the small hexagonal panes of the old-fashioned windows attested

the great antiquity. The magistrate sat as judge, in a large arm-chair covered with red cloth; the clerk sat pen in hand before a large writing-table blackened by age. The magistrate put many questions to Mary, and she answered them all truthfully. She wept, mourned, and protested her innocence. But the judge said, "You cannot deceive me so far as to make me believe what is impossible. No one was in the room but you; no one can have the ring but you; therefore confess it at once."

Mary pleaded and wept. She repeated her protestations. "I cannot, and I know not how to speak otherwise. I know nothing whatever of the ring: I have not seen it, and I have it not."

"The ring has been seen in your hands," said the judge, sternly. "What answer can you make to this?"

Mary still insisted that it was impossible. The judge rang a little bell, and Harriet was put into the witness-box. To account for her appearance, we must tell what had taken place in the meantime at the castle.

In the excess of her anger and envy on account of the dress, and with the wicked intention to deprive Mary of the favour of her mistress, Harriet had said to several persons in the castle, "No one can have the ring but that wretched girl, the gardener's daughter. When I saw her coming down stairs, she had a ring set with precious stones in her hand. She hid it, and looked frightened,

when she saw me. I thought it was very suspicious. I did not wish to be rash, and therefore said nothing about it. Perhaps, thought I, they may have given her the ring, as they have given her so many presents before. If she had stolen it, I knew it would soon be missed, and then it would be time enough to speak. I am very glad that I did not chance to go into the Countess's room at the time. Such wicked creatures as that hypocritical girl may cause honest people to be suspected."

They took Harriet at her word, and she was summoned to give evidence before the Court. When she was put into the witness-box, and the judge warned her to speak the truth, as in the presence of God, her heart throbbed, and her knees trembled beneath her. But the wicked young woman neither gave ear to the words of the judge nor to the voice of her own conscience. She thought, "If I now confess that I have told a lie, I shall be dismissed in disgrace, or perhaps imprisoned." She therefore persisted in her false statement, and said boldly to Mary, "You have the ring; I saw it in your hand."

Mary was horror-struck when she heard this falsehood, but she did not return railing for railing. She only wept, and could scarcely articulate these words, in a voice stifled with sobs—"It is not true. You did not see the ring in my hand. How can you so perjure yourself, and make me so miserable, who have done you no harm!"

But Harriet could not be turned from her purpose; she was looking only to her own temporal advantage, and her heart was full of envy and hatred of Mary. She repeated her false accusation, and added several additional circumstances, and, having been cross-examined in vain, was at length dismissed.

"You are convicted," said the judge to Mary. "Your guilt is clear. Every circumstance is against you. The young Countess's maid saw the ring in your hand. Now confess what you have done with it."

Mary assured him that she had it not—that she had never seen it. According to the barbarous custom of the time, the judge ordered her to be flogged, to force her to confess. Mary screamed and wept, but, with prayer to God for strength and help, she repeated her protestations of innocence; but these availed not. She was most cruelly maltreated.

Pale, trembling, bleeding, and exhausted, she was taken back to prison. Her wounds gave her great pain. She lay tossing sleeplessly half the night on her hard bed of straw. She wept and groaned, but at length she found relief in prayer. This strengthened and soothed her, and ere long she sank into a refreshing slumber.

The next day Mary was again brought before the Court. As severity had failed to move her, the judge now endeavoured to induce her to confess by gentle and kind

promises. "Your life is forfeited," said he; "you have been found guilty, and by the law you deserve to die; but if you will confess where the ring is, you shall be set free. What you have already suffered shall be considered sufficient punishment. You shall be allowed to go home in peace with your father. Consider well, and choose between life and death. I mean kindly to you. I am advising you for your good. Of what use will the stolen ring be to you if you are put to death?"

All persuasions were vain; Mary continued to assert her innocence.

The judge, who had observed her great love for her father, continued thus:—"If you persist in silence, and if you do not value your own young life, think at least of your old father! Could you bear to see his hoary head fall bleeding beneath the axe of the executioner? Who but he could have persuaded you to persist so obstinately in falsehood? Do you intend that it should cost him his life?"

Mary was so terrified when she heard these words. that she nearly fainted.

"Confess," said the judge, "that you have taken the ring. A single syllable—the little word, 'yes'—may save your own life, and that of your father!"

This was a sore temptation to Mary. She stood long silent. The thought came into her mind, that she might

say she had taken the ring, and had lost it on her way home. But she resisted the evil thought. "No," said she, within herself, "it is better through everything to keep fast to the truth. To tell a lie would be a great sin. For no bribe would I commit such a sin, not even if by so doing I could save both myself and my father. I will obey Thee, O my God, and leave all in Thy hands, trusting in Thee to save us." She then said aloud, in a tone of deep emotion, "If I were to say that I have the ring, it would be a lie; and I will not tell a lie even to save myself from death. But," continued she, "if blood must flow, let it be mine only. I implore you to spare my good father; have pity on his grey hairs. I would gladly die to save him."

All present were affected by these words. They touched the heart even of the judge, stern and severe as he was. He said no more, but made a sign that Mary should be reconducted to prison.

"Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on;
Fix on his word thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done.

"Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
He'll gently clear thy way;
Wait thou his time, thy darkest night
Shall end in brightest day."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER IN PRISON.

THE judge found himself not a little embarrassed.

"It is now the third day," said he, on the following morning, to his clerk, "and we are no further advanced than we were the first hour. If I could see any possibility that anyone else could have taken the ring, I would be

inclined to believe that girl innocent. Such obstinacy at so tender an age is a thing quite unheard of. But the evidence is too strong against her. She must have stolen the ring. It cannot be otherwise."

He went to see the Countess, and questioned her again about every little circumstance; he also re-examined Harriet. He sat nearly all day considering the report of the trial, and weighed every word that Mary had uttered. At length, late in the evening, he sent for Mary's father, who was ushered into his room.

"James," began he, "I have been always known to be a severe man, but no one can say that I have ever done an unjust action. I think that you must be quite sure that I do not wish to condemn your daughter to death; but she has been found guilty of theft, and, according to law, she must die. Her guilt has been fully proved by the evidence of the lady's-maid. If, indeed, the ring could be found and restored to its owner, she might be pardoned on account of her youth. But if she persists so obstinately in falsehood, she must be old in wickedness, though young in years, and I can hold out no hope of pardon. Go, then, to her, James, persuade her to restore the ring, and then I promise you that if she does this, she shall not be put to death, but the punishment will be commuted into one less severe. You are her father; you have very great influence over her. If you cannot induce her to

confess, what can anyone think, but that you are in collusion with her, and are an accomplice in her crime. I repeat once more, if the ring be not produced, it will go hard with you."

The father replied, "I will, indeed, speak with her; but I know already that she did not steal the ring, and therefore she has nothing to confess. However, I shall do all in my power, and if my innocent child must die, I esteem it a great mercy to be permitted to see her once more."

The officer conducted the old man in silence to Mary's cell, placed a small lamp on the stone table in it, on which stood an earthen pitcher containing water, and a plate on which was Mary's supper, that was still untouched. The officer then quitted the cell, and closed the door, leaving the father and daughter together.

Mary was lying on her straw couch, in a half slumber, with her face turned to the wall. When she opened her eyes and saw the glimmer of the lamp, she turned round, perceived her father, uttered a loud cry, and sprang from her bed so hastily that her chains rattled, and she fell, half fainting, on her father's neck. He seated himself on the straw beside her, and folded her in his arms. They sat some time in silence, and mingled their tears together.

At length the father began to speak of the commission

that he had received. "Oh, father!" interrupted Mary, "surely *you* cannot doubt that I am innocent! Oh, my God!" continued she, weeping, "does everyone believe me to be a thief, even my own father? Oh, father! believe my word; I assure you that I am not a thief."

"Be calm, my dear child, I *do* believe you," said her father; "but I have been commanded to question you." Both were again silent.

Her father looked earnestly at Mary. Her cheeks were pale and care-worn, her eyes red and swollen with weeping, her long, fair hair, which fell round her like a mantle, was rough and dishevelled. "My poor child." said he, "God has laid a heavy burden on you! And I fear—I very much fear—the heaviest, the most terrible, is yet to come! Ah, perhaps—perhaps they will even cut off this dear young head!"

"Oh, father," said Mary, "I do not think of myself, but of your grey head. O God, grant that I may not have to see it fall on the scaffold!"

"Fear nothing for me, dear child," said her father. "They will not harm me; but you, my darling, are in great danger. Although I have still some hope, yet I believe their cruelty may go so far as to take your life."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mary, joyfully, "if you are safe, the heaviest load is off my mind. All is well! I assure you, my dear father, that I do not fear death. I am going to

God, to my Saviour! I shall meet my mother in heaven. Oh, how joyful it will be!"

These words deeply pierced the heart of the old father. He wept like a child. "God be praised," said he, at length, clasping his hands, "God be praised, my darling, that I find you so composed. But it is hard, very hard, for an old, worn-out man, a loving father, to lose his only, his dearly-beloved child, the only comfort, the last support, the crown and joy of his old age! Yet," sobbed he, in a broken voice, "O Lord, thy will be done! Thou requirest a heavy sacrifice from a father's heart, but I surrender her, if it be thy will! Into thy hands I commit her, my dearest on earth. I trust in Thee; Thou wilt order all things for the best! Ah! dear Mary, it is better that you should die innocent, than that I should ever live to see you led into sin. Forgive me, my dear child, for saying this. You are indeed good, very good, worthy to be among the angels in heaven; but the world is wicked, very wicked, and fall is possible, for even angels fell. If it be God's holy will that you should die, my darling, better that you should die innocent. You will be transplanted, like a pure white lily, from this rude world to the better land, and, cleansed from all sin in the Saviour's blood, you will be with Him in Paradise."

A torrent of tears choked his utterance. "Yet one thing more," said he, after a little while. "Harriet has

given evidence against you. She asserted upon oath that she had seen the ring in your hand. If you are put to death, her evidence will have caused it; but, dearest Mary, you forgive her, don't you? You have no ill-feeling towards her? Ah, my child, even in this dark prison, loaded with chains, you are happier than she is, living in ease and luxury in the castle of the Count. Better, far better, is it to die innocent like you, than to live like Harriet with a guilty conscience. Forgive her, Mary, as your Saviour forgave his murderers. Is it not true that you forgive her, and that you take all this affliction as coming from the hand of God?" Mary assured him that she fully forgave her.

The gaoler's step was heard in the passage. "Now," said her father, "I must go. I commend you to God and his mercy. I commit you into the hands of the Redeemer, who died for you. Should we never meet again, my child, should this be the last time that I look upon you on earth, we shall not long be parted, for I shall soon follow you to heaven! For this blow—I feel, I know, that I cannot long survive it!"

The gaoler now came in, and warned the father that he must go. Mary wished to keep him, and threw her arms round him. He gently disengaged himself. She sank back unconscious on her straw!

James was again brought before the judge. "Before

Almighty God, in whose presence we stand, I assure you," said he, raising his right hand as he entered the room, "she is innocent. My child is not a thief."

"I would willingly believe it," said the judge; "but, alas! I am not permitted to pass sentence according to the protestations of you and your daughter; I must decide according to the evidence, and act as it is my duty to do, according to the letter of the law."

"Of all the knots which Nature ties,
The secret, sacred sympathies,
That, as with viewless chains of gold,
The heart a happy prisoner hold;
None is more chaste, more bright, more pure,
Stronger stern trials to endure;
None is more purged of earthly leaven,
More like the love of highest heaven,
Than that which binds, in bonds how blest,
A daughter to a father's breast!"

J. W. CUNNINGHAM.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SENTENCE AND ITS EXECUTION.

EVERYONE in the castle, and in Eichburg, was anxious to know what would be Mary's fate. All that felt kindly towards her feared for her life, for at that time theft was punished with extreme severity. Many had been punished with death for stealing a sum of money not

the twentieth part of the value of the ring. The Count wished nothing more earnestly than that Mary should be proved innocent. He attentively perused the minutes of the trial, and had many consultations with the magistrate ; but could not convince himself of her innocence, because it seemed nearly impossible that anyone else could have taken the ring. The two Countesses, mother and daughter, implored with tears in their eyes that Mary might not be put to death. Her old father, in his prison cell, prayed to God day and night without ceasing, that He would make manifest Mary's innocence. Mary, left alone in her cell, when she heard the gaoler's footstep or the clank of his keys, supposed he was coming to announce to her the sentence of death. The executioner had begun to prepare the place of execution, and to clear it from the weeds with which it was overgrown.

One day, when Harriet was walking near the place, she saw him employed at this work, and it seemed as if a dagger had pierced her heart. She felt the stings of remorse, and that night at supper in the castle she could eat nothing, and looked so pale and miserable, that her agitation was observed by all the servants. That night she could not sleep, and Mary's bleeding head haunted her dreams. Her guilty conscience gave her no rest day or night. But the worthless girl was too much under the dominion of her evil passions to listen to the voice of con-

science; she was not sufficiently noble-minded to atone, so far as possible, for her crime, by an honest confession of the truth.

At length the judge passed sentence. Mary, on account of her theft, and her obstinate denial of it, was pronounced deserving of death; but, in consideration of her youth and formerly unblemished reputation, her sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life in the house of correction. Her father, who was considered a participator in her guilt, either as actually her accomplice, or as having caused it by the bad way in which he had brought her up, was banished for ever from the province. All their possessions were confiscated, and were ordered to be sold to pay the law expenses. The Count succeeded in obtaining a mitigation of this sentence. Instead of being sent to the house of correction, Mary was allowed to accompany her father in his exile; and to spare them all noise and publicity, as much as possible, it was settled that Mary and James should be conducted across the boundary early in the morning of the following day.

As Mary and her father passed before the castle gate, accompanied by the police officer, Harriet came out to meet them. Since the affair had taken this turn, this heartless woman had recovered her levity and good spirits. The thought of Mary's death had haunted her, and caused her to feel remorse, but that Mary should be banished

was the very thing she desired. She had always feared that Mary, one day or other, might take her place in the castle. She had now no cause for fear, but the hatred and jealousy she had felt were as strong as ever in her wicked heart. A few days before, the Countess Amelia had observed Mary's basket standing on a side-table in her room, and had said to Harriet, "Take the basket out of my sight. It awakens such sorrowful remembrances, that I cannot look at it without pain."

Harriet had taken it away, and now brought it out in her hand. "Take back your fine present," said she to Mary; "my lady will receive nothing from such hands. Your finery has all gone with the faded flowers, for which you managed to get so well paid. It gives me the greatest pleasure to give you back your basket." She threw the basket at Mary's feet, went back to the castle with a mocking laugh, and closed the gate violently behind her.

With tears in her eyes, Mary silently lifted the basket, and went on her way. Her father had not even a staff for the journey. She had no earthly possession but the basket. She looked back weeping again and again, to gaze upon the home she was leaving, till it disappeared from her view, and at length the castle, and even the top of the church spire, were hidden from her sight by a wooded hill. After the police officer had conducted Mary and her father to the boundary of the province, and had left them in the

forest, the old man, worn out with grief and pain, sat down on a moss-covered stone, under the shade of an old oak-tree.

"Come, my daughter," said he, as, taking Mary's hands in his, he raised them to heaven, "before all things, let us thank God for having delivered us out of the dark, noisome prison, and permitted us once more to enjoy the fresh air under the open sky; let us thank Him that He has saved our lives, and has restored you to me, my dearly-beloved child."

James looked up to the sky, which could be seen clear and blue through the green oak-leaves, and he prayed with a loud voice, "Our Father which art in heaven! Thou only comfort of thy children on earth! Thou Almighty Refuge of the oppressed! accept our united thanks for our merciful deliverance from chains and bonds, imprisonment and death! We thank Thee for all the benefits that Thou hast bestowed upon us in the home that we are leaving. How could we go without first looking up to Thee with grateful hearts? Before we tread the soil of a place in which we are strangers, we ask thy blessing and guidance. Deign to look down on a poor father and his weeping child. Take us under thy almighty protection. Be our guardian and guide in the rough paths which may be before us. Lead us among good people, incline their hearts to have compassion upon us. In thy

wide world let us find a little corner in which we may spend in quietness the remaining days of our pilgrimage, and then die in peace. I believe that, although we know it not, Thou hast already prepared this place for us. With this hope, and trusting in Thee, we go on our way comforted. Strengthen and guide us, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake."

After both had prayed thus, for Mary's heart echoed her father's words, wonderful peace and joy filled their hearts, and they were prepared to go on their way with trust and hope.

"When winter fortunes cloud the brows
Of summer friends, when eyes grow strange,
When plighted faith forgets its vows,
When earth and all things in it change;
O Lord, thy mercies fail me never,
Where once Thou lov'st, Thou lov'st for ever.

"In all extremes, Lord, Thou art still
The mount whereto my hopes do flee;
Oh! make my soul detest all ill,
Because so much abhorr'd by Thee;
Lord, let thy gracious trials show
That I am just, or make me so.

"Fountain of light and living breath,
Whose mercies never fail nor fade!
Fill me with life that hath no death,
Fill me with light that hath no shade;
Appoint the remnant of my days
To see thy power, and sing thy praise."

QUARLES.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

WHILE the father and daughter were still sitting under the tree, Anthony, the Count's old forester, came through the wood. He knew James well, as they had been in attendance on the Count when he was travelling. He had been out that morning in pursuit of a stag.

"Good morning to you, James," said he; "how goes it with you? I thought I heard your voice, and I find I have not been mistaken. Have they really been so cruel as to banish you? It is very hard, in your old age, to be forced to leave your own dear home."

"The earth is the Lord's," replied James, "and wherever we may be under the blue sky, we are in his sight, and his love is ever around us. But our home is in heaven."

"Can it be true," said the forester, kindly, "that they have had the still greater cruelty to cast you out without anything but the clothes you have on? Why, you are not even sufficiently clad for such a journey."

"He who clothes the flowers will also clothe us," replied James.

"And about money?" again asked the forester. "Have you got any with you?"

"We have a good conscience," answered James, "and we are richer with that than we should be without it, even if this stone on which I am sitting were of pure gold, and belonged to us."

"But tell me," said the forester, "have you really not a penny?"

"This empty basket at my feet is our only earthly possession," said James; "what do you think it may be worth?"

"A florin," said the forester, looking perplexed—"a florin, or perhaps a dollar. But what is that?"

"Well," said James, smiling, "then we are rich. If God grants me health and strength, and the use of my hands, I could make at least a hundred such baskets in a year; and with an income of one hundred dollars we might certainly manage very well. My father, who was a basket-maker, insisted that I should learn basket-making as well as gardening, in order to give me useful employment in winter. I thank him for it now. He has done more for me, and provided better for me, than if he had left me three thousand florins, which would have given me a yearly income of a hundred dollars, and allowed me to be idle. A sound mind in a sound body, and a respectable trade, are the best and surest riches on earth."

"Now, God be praised," said the forester, "that you can take it in this way. I quite agree with you. I think, too, that your skill as a gardener will assist you. But tell me, where do you intend to go now?"

"Very far away," said James, "where no one knows us. God will guide our steps."

"James," said the forester, "take this strong, thick crab-stick with you. Fortunately, I brought it with me this morning, because it is somewhat difficult for me to get up yonder hill without it. And here is a little money," continued he, taking a small leathern purse out of his pocket;

"I received it yesterday evening in the village, in payment for wood."

"I will gladly accept the staff," said James, "and keep it in remembrance of an honest man; but I cannot take the money. As it is payment for wood, it belongs to the Count."

"Honest old James," said the forester, "make your mind easy about that; the money is already paid to the Count. I advanced it, many years ago, to a poor man who had lost his cow, and could not pay for the wood he had bought. I thought no more about it till yesterday evening, when quite unexpectedly he paid me the money with many thanks, as he is now in better circumstances. God has sent the money just at the right time for you."

"I will thankfully accept it," said James. "God will reward you for your kindness. See, Mary," continued he to his daughter, "how graciously God has provided for us at the very outset of our journey. Even before we had crossed the boundary, He has sent our good friend here, who has supplied me with money and a staff to support me on the way. How soon God has answered our prayer! Be of good courage, and fear not; God will continue to care for us."

The old forester now took leave of them, with tears in his eyes. "Farewell, honest James—farewell, good Mary," said he, while he first shook hands with the father and

then with the daughter. "I have always thought you honest people, and I think so still. You will get on well yet, no fear; honesty is sure to thrive. Yes, yes; he who does right, and trusts in God, will never be forsaken. Take that assurance with you, as my parting word, and may God guide and protect you!"

The forester turned away, deeply moved, and went towards Eichburg. Then James stood up, took his daughter by the hand, and walked on with her along the high road through the forest—forth into the wide world.

"Parted friends may meet again,
When the storms of life are past,
And the spirit, freed from pain,
Basks in friendship that will last.

"Worldly cares may sever wide,
Distant far their path may be;
But the bond by death untied,
They shall once again be free.

"Parted friends again may meet,
From the toils of nature free;
Crowned with mercy—oh! how sweet
Will eternal friendship be!"

C. W. Thomson.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EXILES FIND A HOME.

DAY after day Mary and her father wandered on, till they had reached a distance of more than sixty miles from their old home. During all that time they had not been able to find a place in which they could remain with the hope of getting work; and their small sum of money

was exhausted. They fared very ill. The mere thought of asking alms was unspeakably painful to them, but at length they were forced to do so. At many a door they were repulsed with harsh words, and at many another a dry crust was thrown to them with a grudge, and they had nothing to drink with it but a little water from the nearest stream. Sometimes a little soup or cold vegetables were given them in an earthen plate; still more rarely a small quantity of broken victuals or pastry; but Mary could often see that the smallest and worst pieces of the left food were picked out for them. For many days they never tasted anything warm, and at night they were thankful to find shelter in a barn.

One day, when the road on which they were travelling led them between woods and hills, far from any village or even scattered houses, the old man was suddenly taken ill. Pale and speechless, he sank down on the fallen spines of the fir-trees, at the foot of a hill covered with wood. Mary was nearly beside herself with terror and anguish. In vain she looked all around for fresh water; she could not find a single drop. In vain she called aloud for help; the echo alone replied. Far and wide there was no human habitation to be seen. With trembling limbs Mary hastily climbed the hill, that she might be better able to see all around. Then at length she perceived on the opposite side of the hill a farm-house, which stood alone on the

edge of the wood, surrounded by ripening corn-fields and green meadows.

She ran as fast as she could, and reached the house almost breathless. With streaming eyes, and a voice broken with sobs, she implored for help. The farmer and his wife, both rather aged, were good, kind-hearted people. They were touched by Mary's grief, her pale face, her tears, and her anguish.

The farmer's wife said to her husband, "Put a horse in the light cart; we can soon bring the sick man here."

The farmer went to harness the horse and bring out the cart. The farmer's wife got ready a few blankets, an earthen jar of cold water, and a bottle with a little vinegar.

As soon as Mary heard that the cart-road round the foot of the hill was very bad, and much further than the path across the hill, she at once set off to return by the way she had come, that she might be sooner with her father. She took with her a pitcher of water and a little vinegar.

When she reached the spot where she had left her father, he had somewhat revived. He was sitting up under a fir-tree, and was heartily glad to see Mary, whose absence he had remarked with pain when he recovered consciousness. The light cart soon after arrived, and he was gently laid in it and carried to the farm.

The farmer had a neat back room, with a back kitchen, and a small room beside it, forming a little separate lodging, which now chanced to be empty. He kindly cleared this for the sick man. The farmer's wife prepared a comfortable bed for him. Mary was glad to sleep on a mattress on the floor. She was contented with anything, if she could only make her father comfortable. James's illness proceeded entirely from exhaustion, caused by the want of food, the discomfort that he had endured, and the fatigue of the long journey.

The good farmer's wife gave all which she could offer to refresh and restore the poor old man. She spared neither meal nor eggs, milk or butter; even a few fowls were willingly given to make strong soup for her sick, weary guest.

The farmer brought in almost every day a young pigeon from his dove-cote. "There," said he to his wife, with a smile, "since you do not spare your poultry, I must do something too."

The farmer and his wife had been wont every year to go to an annual festival held in a neighbouring village. This year, after a consultation with each other, they resolved to remain at home, and to set apart the money which they would otherwise spend at the festival, to buy some good old wine for the invalid.

Mary thanked them with grateful tears. She thanked God, who, in their great need, had guided them to such kind and hospitable people. "God be thanked," said she, "there are kind people everywhere; but the kindest hearts are often found under rough exteriors, in plain country homes."

Mary scarcely ever left her father's side. She was always near to answer when he called, yet her clever hands were never idle. She was a very good needle-woman and knitter, and she worked constantly for the kind farmer's wife. She wasted not a moment. Her new friend was much pleased with her industry, and her quiet, gentle, and modest behaviour.

Old James was quickly restored by the good food and nursing which he now received, and he was soon able to be out of bed.

As soon as his strength had to some extent returned, it was impossible for him to be idle. Mary was sent to fetch hazel-branches and willows from the wood, that he might begin his basket-making. His first work was an offering of gratitude—a neat useful hand-basket for the farmer's wife. He contrived exactly to suit her taste. The basket was beautifully shaped and firmly made. He dyed some willow-twigs of various colours, and wove in the cover of the basket, in dark red letters, the initials of his kind friend's name, and the date when she had so

hospitably sheltered him. On the sides of the basket a pattern was woven, in yellow, green, and brown willows, representing the farm-house, with its brown walls, thatched roof, and a few green pine-trees near it. This allusion to the name of the farm, which was called "Pine Farm," pleased the farmer's wife. She was greatly delighted with the pretty and useful gift, and all who saw it admired it very much.

When James had quite recovered his health, he said to his kind friends at the farm—"I have been long enough a burden to you; it is full time that I should take my staff and wander on further."

But the farmer took his hand kindly, and said—"What has come over you, dear James? I hope we have not offended you in any way. Why do you wish to leave us? You are usually a sensible man; this new whim is not like you."

The farmer's wife wiped away a tear with her apron, as she said—"Oh, stay with us! It is late in the season already! See, the leaves on the trees and hedges are yellow, and winter is at the door! Do you really wish to be ill again?"

James assured her that he only wished to go because he was afraid of being a burden to them.

"Make your mind easy about that!" said the farmer; "how is it possible that you can be a burden to us? You

are not in our way in your little back room there, and you earn all that you need."

"Yes, indeed!" said the farmer's wife, "Mary alone earns it all by her sewing and knitting. And if you, James, will go on with your basket-making, you will have plenty to do. I took your pretty basket with me last week, when I went to the christening of the miller's child. There was a large party, and they all admired my basket, and wished to have one like it. I will get you plenty of orders, if you like. You need not want work."

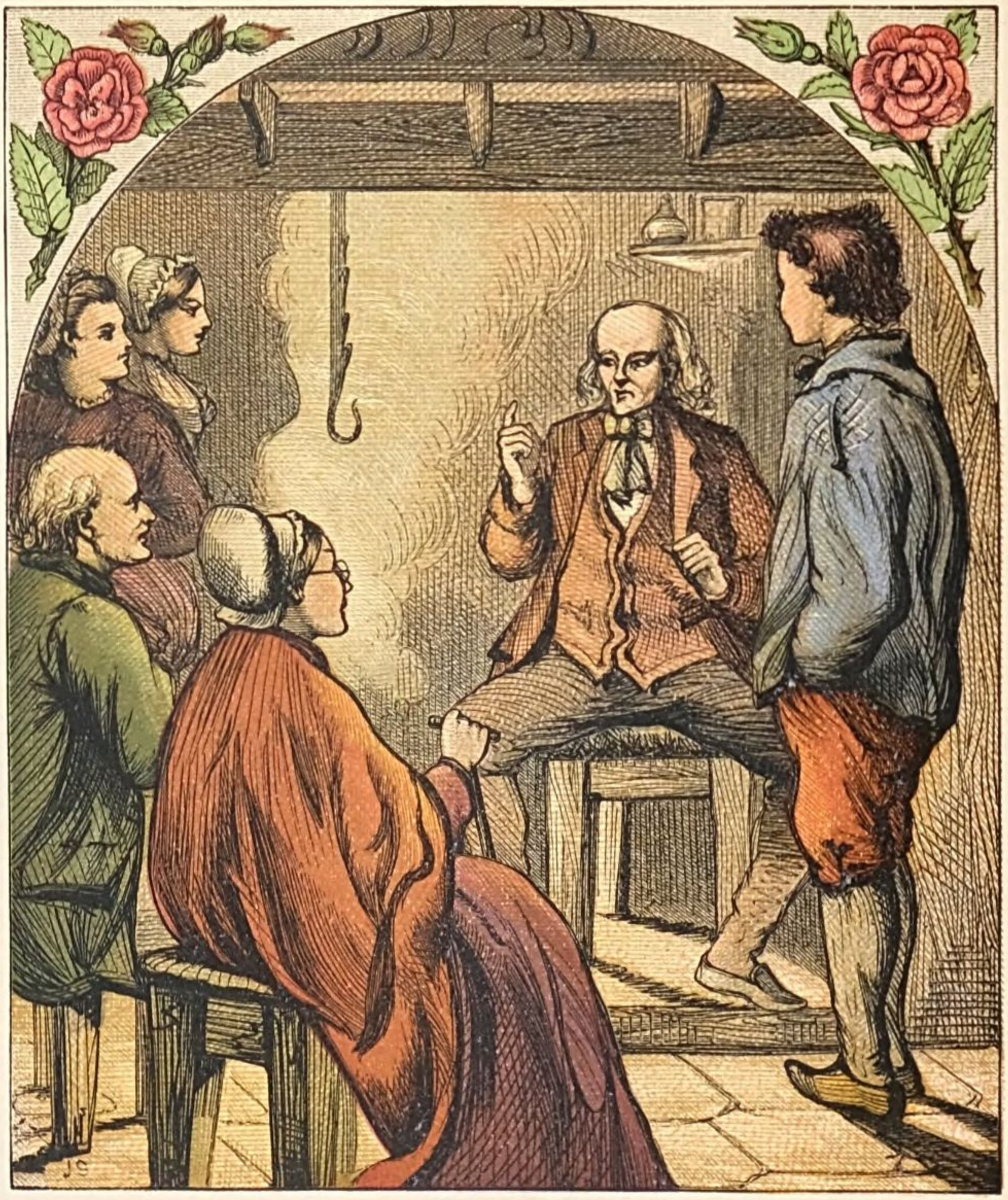
James and Mary agreed to remain where they were so kindly welcomed, and both the farmer and his wife were heartily glad of it.

"When all within is peace,
How nature seems to smile!
Delights that never cease,
The livelong day beguile.

"It is content of heart
Gives nature power to please;
The mind that feels no smart
Enlivens all it sees;

"Can make a wintry sky
Seem bright as smiling May,
And evening's closing eye
As peep of early day."

COWPER.



CHAPTER X.

PLEASANT DAYS AT THE PINE FARM.

JAMES and Mary now settled themselves in their little rooms, and prepared to begin housekeeping. A few articles of necessary furniture and a few kitchen utensils were provided. Mary was much pleased to have once more a fireside of her own, and to be able to cook her

father's meals in comfort. Both father and daughter were contented and happy. They had many a pleasant talk while James was making baskets, and Mary was busy with her sewing and knitting. On many an evening they were invited into the front room, where all the farmer's household were assembled; and all were pleased to listen to James's amusing stories and pleasant conversation. Winter with its storms passed quickly and pleasantly away amid these useful occupations.

Near the farm there was a large piece of garden ground, which had been allowed to lie waste. The farmer and his wife had not time to attend to it, because they were so constantly busy on the farm; and even if they had been able to spare the time, they did not understand gardening. James undertook to make a good garden of this useless piece of ground.

He cleared and dug it well in autumn, and as soon as the snow melted in the early spring, he and Mary worked hard in it, both early and late. He fenced it round, laid it out in beds, filled it with useful vegetables and such flowers as the bees love, and gravelled the walks. Mary took the flower-beds under her especial care, and when her father went to the neighbouring town, to bring seeds and plants for the vegetable garden, she persuaded him to bring also rose-bushes, lilies, auriculas, wallflowers, stocks, and other pretty flowers.

So blooming a garden had never before been seen in this remote place, and it became famous in all the valley, and in the neighbouring villages. The orchard also prospered under James's care, and bore better fruit and larger crops. A blessing seemed to rest on all that he did.

The old gardener was again in his element. As in the old times at Eichburg, he began to teach Mary lessons from the flowers and plants growing in profusion around them. There was scarcely a flower or a green leaf that did not seem to give him a text for a fresh lesson.

In the early days of spring, Mary looked for violets under the hedge which bordered one side of the garden, that she might bring her father the first opening flowers, as she had been accustomed to do. One day she joyfully presented him with a beautiful sweet-smelling nosegay.

"Well," said her father, smiling as he took the pretty bunch of blue flowers, "who seeks well is sure to find. But listen," continued he; "it is worthy of notice that this lovely little flower, the sweet violet, often grows under thorns; and this seems to me to apply to our own case. Who could have believed that in this lonely valley, and under this old moss-covered thatch, we should find so much comfort and joy? There is no path in life so thorny, but we may find some quiet pleasures hidden under the thorns, if we seek for them. Be meek and humble in heart, my child, and even amid many sorrows,

God will send you that peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

A tradesman's wife from the town came one day to buy flax from the farmer's wife, and brought her little boy with her. While the flax was being examined, and the price of it settled, the boy, left to himself, escaped through the open door into the garden, and ran eagerly to a bush covered with full-blown roses, to gather flowers, but in his haste he fell, and was sorely pricked by the thorns. His loud cries brought both his mother and the farmer's wife to his help; James and Mary too came to see what was the matter. The boy was standing crying passionately, with face and hands bleeding, and loudly abusing the ugly, deceitful rose-bush.

"There are many children of larger growth like him," said James. "Like the rose-bush, every worldly pleasure is surrounded by thorns, and many rush eagerly to grasp them. One seeks his amusement in dancing and gambling, another in intoxication, or even worse. The pleasure soon passes away, leaving a cruel sting, and the pleasure-seeker stands like this boy, weeping and lamenting, and accusing, as the cause of his misery, what he has most loved. Even innocent pleasures should be moderately used, and, while we admire the beauty of the rose, we must not grasp it too eagerly. God has given man reason for his guide, that he may learn to be temperate

in all things. He must not blindly follow his own pleasure, but try to find his pleasure in the path of duty."

One lovely summer morning, after several days' rain, Mary went with her father to the garden, and found the first lilies in full blow, looking lovely in the rising sun. She ran to call the people in the farm, who had been anxiously waiting to see the lilies in blossom. All admired them much.

"What a dazzling white! how pure and spotless they are!" said the farmer's wife.

"Yes, truly," said James, earnestly. "Oh, that the souls of men were as pure and spotless as the lilies, then would they enjoy the greatest possible happiness! Is it not said that 'the pure in heart shall see God?' I have often before taught you, dear Mary, that none are pure by nature, and you know well how we can become pure, in no other way than through the cleansing blood of Christ. Thus washed, we shall shine for ever in robes as white and spotless as the lily blossoms."

"How beautifully straight is the slender stem!" said the farmer; "how erect and upright it stands!"

"It is like a finger-post pointing upwards to heaven," said James; "I delight to look at it. Such lilies should be in every country garden. We, working people, are obliged to grub so much in the ground, that we sometimes forget to look upwards. This lovely upright flower,

with its white cup open to the rays of the sun, ought always to remind us, that amid all our toil and hard labour we too should be looking upwards, and seeking for better things than earth can give. "All plants," continued James impressively, "even the most delicate, have a tendency to grow upwards, and those which are too weak to rise by themselves, are so formed that they cling to something stronger, and so climb higher and higher. The honeysuckle, the ivy, the sweet-peas, and the hops, even the wild convolvulus in the hedge, are all ever clinging and striving to raise themselves from the ground. It would be very sad if man, with his high aspirations, hopes, and wishes, should creep on the earth, instead of rising upwards to heaven. If we prize this world and its vanities too much, we shall always be grovelling on the ground, for 'where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.' But let us cling to Christ, and rise upwards by his help. Let us 'set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth,' and so shall we be ever rising higher and higher, and shall rejoice in the glorious life-giving rays of the Sun of righteousness."

One day James was planting out young seedlings in the same bed which Mary was weeding. "This twofold work, my dear daughter," said he, "is like our life-work here below. Our hearts are like gardens, which God has given us to tend. We must ever be busy in uprooting

the evil, and sowing the good seed, or the garden will soon be a wilderness. By nature, weeds grow therein more luxuriantly than flowers. As the seed I am now sowing cannot thrive unless the weeds are cleared away, and the soil is prepared to receive the refreshing rain and dew, so the good seed sown in our hearts cannot spring up unless God send the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, like the refreshing rain, to cause it to grow and bear fruit abundantly. The soul thus blessed becomes like a well-watered garden, bringing forth abundantly the precious 'fruits of the Spirit.'"

Three springs and summers had glided pleasantly away, since James and Mary first came to the Pine Farm, and they had almost forgotten the sorrows of the past. These years had been well and usefully spent in active industry, lightened by many innocent pleasures, not the least of which to Mary was her father's instructive conversation. At the return of autumn, when the midday sun cast longer shadows, the last ornaments of the garden, the red and blue asters, were in bloom, and the many-coloured foliage of the trees showed the approach of winter, James's health began visibly to decline. He felt his strength daily diminishing. He tried to conceal his feelings of illness from Mary, fearing to distress her; but his teachings from the flowers were of a melancholy cast, often leading to thoughts of death, and his words made Mary feel sad.

One day Mary, as she was gathering flowers, saw a rose, the last lingering blossom on the tree; but when she wished to gather it, its leaves fell off, and were scattered on the ground around her. "So is it with man," said her father. "In youth we are like a newly-opened rose; but like the roses we wither and fade, our season of bloom is very short, and quickly passes. Do not prize, therefore, my dear child, the vain fragile beauty of the body, which will soon pass away, but strive after the beauty of the soul, the ornament which can never fade."

One evening, when they had been gathering in the crop of apples, James was standing on a ladder under one of the trees, and handing down the apples to Mary, which she was carefully laying in a basket. Then he said—"Hear how the autumn wind whistles among the trees, plays with the yellow leaves, and blows about my grey hair! I am in the autumn of life, dear Mary, and one day, if you are spared, your autumn will also come. Try to resemble this tree, which you see rich in good fruits, and may you also bring forth fruit abundantly, so that you may be approved by the Lord of the harvest."

When Mary was sowing seed for the following spring, her father said, "Even so, my daughter, must we one day be laid in the ground and covered with the earth. But be comforted! As the corn of wheat which is laid in the earth rises to new life, and as the seed of the fair flower

also springs up fresh from its grave, so shall we one day rise to a new and glorious life from the darkness of the tomb. Think of this, dear Mary, when at some future day you may have to follow me to the grave. As the seeds that you sow there spring up and blossom, may you regard them as the emblem and the pledge of my resurrection and immortality."

Mary looked anxiously at her father, and she could not but see that he was greatly changed. Two large tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, and she shuddered at the thought that she must lose him. Dark forebodings filled her heart.

"When the spark of life is waning,
Weep not for me;
When the languid eye is straining,
Weep not for me;
When the feeble pulse is ceasing,
Start not at its swift decreasing,
'Tis the fettered soul's releasing;
Weep not for me.

"When the pangs of death assail me,
Weep not me;
Christ is mine—He cannot fail me,
Weep not for me.
Yes! though sin and doubt endeavour
From his love my soul to sever,
Jesus is my strength for ever—
Weep not for me." DALE.

CHAPTER XI.

JAMES'S ILLNESS.

WINTER set in with unusual severity. Hill and valley were covered with snow, and good old James suffered from the cold. He became so ill as to alarm Mary, who entreated him to allow a doctor to be sent for from the neighbouring town, and the kind-hearted farmer

went himself in his sledge to fetch him. After the doctor had seen and prescribed for the sick man, Mary accompanied him to the door. She asked him whether she might venture to hope that her father would recover. The doctor told her that for the present her father was not in danger, but that, at his advanced age, he could not answer how the illness would end. Mary feared the worst from this doubtful answer, and she sank down on a chair when the doctor had left her, and wept bitterly. After a time she became more composed, wiped away her tears, and tried to appear calm before her father, that she might not alarm or distress him.

Mary attended her beloved father with the tenderest care. She did everything for him that was in her power. She watched all night long by his bedside. When others offered to take her place, lest the constant watching should be too much for her, if, yielding to their persuasions, she consented to lie down for a few moments, she could not close her eyes. If her father even coughed, she started up; if he moved, she was at once by his side to see what he wanted. She prepared and served the most nourishing food to him with the tenderest love. She arranged his pillows, she read to him, she prayed for him without ceasing. Often while he slept she stood by him with clasped hands, and looking up to heaven, said, "Oh, my God! spare him to me still, even for a few years!" She often remained

up half the night sewing or knitting, to earn money to provide comforts for him. Yet, frugal as she was in her own wants, she would have spent the last farthing she possessed to purchase anything that might do him good.

The pious old man, although he had somewhat revived for the present, yet felt that his "sickness was unto death." Notwithstanding, he was calm and composed, and spoke cheerfully of his approaching death. Poor Mary could not bear this, and when her father spoke of his death, she said, amid her tears—

"Oh, do not speak of it, dearest father! I dare not even think of it! What would become of me? Ah! your poor Mary would then have no friend on earth!"

"Weep not, dear child," said her father, taking her hand kindly. "If I am taken away, you have still a Father in heaven. He has promised to be a 'Father to the fatherless.' Remember what David says in the Psalms, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.' Your Father in heaven will be ever with you, even if your father on earth is taken from you. How to provide for your food and clothing is among the least of my cares. The birds of the air are fed, and so will God feed you. 'Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long.' Ah! far different cares weigh upon my mind. My only anxiety is, that you should remain as gentle, pious, and innocent as, thank God, you are

now. My beloved daughter, you know not how corrupt and wicked the world is, and what evil men there are in it. Alas! it is too true that there are men who would think it merely a jest to deprive you, poor girl, of innocence, honour, peace of mind, and the whole happiness of your life. They may call you childish if you speak to them of the fear of God, the voice of conscience, the commandments of God, and of endless eternity; but if they regard not these things, flee from such men, dearest Mary. Remember, they are those whom the Bible commands us to shun. However much they may flatter you, and call you beautiful, hovering round you like the butterfly round the flowers, yet listen not to them, and mind not what they say. Never accept a present from them, and never believe their promises. Satan himself has appeared in the form of an angel of light; and a poisonous serpent often lurks among flowers. For your protection, God has given you a true badge of innocence—holy modesty; if anyone suggests an evil thought or says a word that is not innocent, you will feel the glow of modesty rush into your cheeks. Take warning from this guardian of innocence! Neglect it not, that it may not leave you for ever. As long as the blush of modesty remains, if you listen to its warning, you are safe from temptation. But as soon as you slight this warning, even in the least degree—if you yield even once —you are in danger of being lost for ever!

"Oh! Mary, there will be an enemy in your own heart. There will be moments in your life in which you may feel a desire for what is evil, and in which you may easily persuade yourself that you are not very wicked, even if you break the strict rules that have been imposed upon you. But take warning, and engrave the counsel of your dying father deeply on your heart! Do, speak, even think, nothing for which you must blush were it done or spoken in your father's presence. My eyes will soon be closed for ever; I shall no longer be able to guard you; but think that your heavenly Father is everywhere present, and sees the secrets of your heart. You would be ashamed to show any evil feeling to me, your father on earth; fear infinitely more to give offence to Him, your omniscient Father in heaven.

"Dearest Mary, remember my advice. If temptation should ever assail you, think of me, remember my pale face, my grey hair, the tears that are falling over my wasted cheeks. Come, put your hand into mine, cold and withered as it is, that will soon be laid in the dust. Promise me never to forget my words. In the hour of temptation, try to imagine that you feel the clasp of my cold hand, holding you back from the brink of the abyss.

"My darling girl, you look upon my pale and careworn features with tears of sorrow. Oh! see now that all on earth is passing away. Once I was as fresh and blooming

as you are now. One day you will be as pale and wasted as I now am, lying on my dying bed, unless it please God to take you away still earlier. The joys of my youth have faded like the flowers of the past spring, the place whereof knows them no more; they have vanished like the dew on the early blossoms, which glitters for a moment and is seen no more. But noble deeds are like the precious stones, which have an enduring value; virtue and a good conscience are like the noblest of precious stones, the diamond, which is indestructible. Strive to obtain this jewel! The good that I have done is now my only joy, and my faults and failures are my only pain. Keep close to God, dear child, trust ever in Him walk, as in his presence. In Him I have found my sweetest joys, and in Him, also, the best and only consolation in my sorrow.

"Believe me, Mary, I speak the truth! If it were otherwise, I would tell you. I have seen the world as much as most men, when I was travelling with the Count. In all the large cities, in which there was anything beautiful or attractive to be seen, I was permitted to visit it. I enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, for I saw and heard as well as the young Count did the gay masquerades, the noisy music, the merry talking, and the jests; and of the delicate food and costly wines there remained always more than I could consume. But worldly pleasures such as these left my heart empty. I assure you that during one quarter

of an hour of quiet devotion in the bower of our garden at Eichburg, under this thatched roof, or even here on my dying bed, I have enjoyed more inward peace and pleasure than all these vain delights afforded me. Seek thy joy in God, dear Mary, and thou wilt find it in rich abundance.

"You know well, my dear child, that during my long life I have not been without many sorrows. Ah! when your dear mother died, my heart was like the dry and thirsty ground which is burnt up by the heat of the sun, and is longing for rain. Even thus did I long for comfort, but I found it in God. Oh, my child, there will certainly be days in your future life when your heart, too, will be like the dry and thirsty ground; yet be undismayed. Not in vain does the earth thirst for rain; God sends it in his own good time. Seek comfort in God, He will strengthen and refresh your heart, as the parched and cracked earth is refreshed by the mild and gentle rain.

"Dearest child, always keep your firm confidence in God's holy providence. God causes all things to work for good to them that love Him; He leads them through the path of sorrow to endless joy.

"Do you remember, dearest Mary, what bitter sorrow you felt when, on our journey, I sank down on the high road unable to move? Yet this illness was the very means used by God to prepare for us this peaceful home, where

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we have been so happy for more than three years. But for this sickness, we should probably either have passed the door of our kind friends, or our misfortunes would not have excited their compassion. They might perhaps have given us a cup of milk and a piece of dry bread, and then have let us go on our way. But for this sickness, we should not have learned to know these dear friends, and should not have loved them so much. All the pleasures that we have here enjoyed, all the good that we have done here, and the many hundred days of content and pleasure that we have lived here, have been blessings that have sprung from that attack of sickness. Thus, dear Mary, in the most melancholy occurrences of our life we can see the grace and mercy of God. As God scatters his flowers on mountain and valley, in the wood and by the brook, even on the moor and in the marsh, with a liberal hand, so that we may everywhere see the evidences of his goodness and loving-kindness; even so has He ordered all the events of our lives according to his infinite wisdom, his love and compassion, so that every attentive mind may remark this, and find comfort and joy therein.

"Amongst our greatest sorrows we must reckon the accusation brought against you of theft. While you were lying in chains and bonds, condemned to death, and we, in your prison-house, were weeping and mourning together,

these sorrows were certainly bringing great blessings, and I think that these blessings are now visible. At the time when the young Countess distinguished you above all other girls in the neighbourhood, honoured you with her company, gave you so beautiful a dress, wished to have you always with her, then you thought—did you not?—that you were happy. But how easily amongst the honours, pleasures, and luxuries of this world might you not have become vain, frivolous, worldly-minded, and forgetful of God! God has been gracious to you, He has ordered it otherwise, and sent misfortunes to us. In prison, in misery, and, at length, on our weary wanderings, we have learned to know Him better, and have been brought nearer to Him. In this remote place, far from the distractions and disquietudes of the world, He has prepared a better place for us. Thou bloomest here like a flower in the solitary wilderness, safe from all dangers.

"God, the true and faithful one, will order all things for your good. I truly believe that He has heard my prayer, and will yet bring your innocence to light, even if I should not live to see it. It is not necessary to make my mind easy, because I am already convinced that you are innocent. Yes, dear Mary, happiness and joy will spring forth to you even out of the sorrows that you have endured; although earthly happiness is but a small consideration, and the great reason why God sends sorrow to

us will never be known until we are in heaven, for it is through much tribulation that we must enter into glory.

"Grieve not, then, pious soul, if thou art brought into poverty and overwhelmed with anxieties; but believe that God will graciously care for you, and that you need have no care. Wherever his holy providence may lead you, and however hard may be the lot which has been appointed for you, believe that trials are sent to render you still more virtuous and happy.

"As a gardener transplants young plants from the seed-beds when he finds it best for them, and as he does this at the time best suited to make them thrive and grow; so God removes each human being from this world to the next, at the time and in the circumstances that are best for his or her eternal good. All things work together for good to his people. He graciously removes me to a land of pure delight, where I shall be perfectly blessed. And be assured, dear child, that this event, which you feel to be so heavy an affliction to you, will be over-ruled for good. As in all your past sorrows, so will it ever be. My sickness and death, distressing now, will be turned into a blessing. 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.'

"My loving child! when I even mention death, you

burst into tears afresh. Oh, weep not! Look not upon death as so terrible, rather look upon it as a source of joy to a Christian. Let me remind you of some of the lessons that I taught you in our old garden at Eichburg. Remember our seed-beds in spring. How weak and insignificant the little green shoots looked when they first sprang up in the narrow bed. From their appearance then you could not have told what magnificent flowers they would become, or what rich fruits they would one day produce. But if they had remained crowded together in the little seed-beds, they would neither have produced flowers nor fruits. They would not have had room to grow. The gardener never intended them to remain there to decay and rot; no, he merely left them there till they were ready to be transplanted to the open garden, in which, under the beautiful blue sky, enjoying the fresh air and the golden sunshine, and refreshed with the rain and dew of heaven, they might grow and blossom in beauty and luxuriance. Remember how pleased you were when I transplanted the little seedlings, and how you often urged me not to delay it, because the poor plants were getting sickly and required removal. You were glad when you saw them planted out in the garden, and you used to say, 'How much better they are now! I think I see an improvement in them already.' We poor human beings are like these weak little seedlings, and our earth is like the

close moist seed-bed. Here on earth is not our abiding-place; here we are like these feeble, miserable plants. But we shall become something better and more glorious when God shall transplant us into his great, and glorious, and beautiful garden above.

"Weep not for me, dear child. For me it is far better to depart and be with Christ. It is good for me to put off this vile body in which I have suffered so much, and to be free for ever from sin, and pain, and woe! Dear Mary, do you not remember the extreme joy we felt in our blooming garden in the lovely mornings in spring? Heaven may be compared to a Paradise, an infinitely glorious garden, in which reigns an eternal spring. I am now going to this better country. Oh, be a pious girl, keep ever close to Christ, and trust in Him, and we shall one day meet again in heaven! Here we have suffered many trials and sorrows together, and must part in tears. But there we shall meet to dwell together in joy and blessedness, never to part again! There shall I see your mother again! Oh, how I rejoice at the thought! Oh, Mary, seek to be prepared to join us! If you should be in prosperity, forget not amid the fleeting joys of earth the glory that is prepared for us in heaven. Weep not, then, my beloved child, but rather rejoice in the hope that is set before you!"

Thus the pious father made use of the last days of his

life to comfort his daughter whom he was obliged to leave alone in the world; and thus he warned her to beware of the evils and temptations that would surround her in the world. Every word that he uttered was like a good grain of corn that fell into good ground. "I have made you sorrowful, dear child," said he, "and have caused you to shed many tears. But these tears are needful. What is sown amid tears, takes deeper root and thrives better, like the grain of corn that is sown amidst the soft and gentle showers of spring. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

"Where calm the spirit sinks to ease,
Lulled by angelic symphonies!
Oh, then to think of meeting there
The friends whose grave received our tear!

"The child long lost, the wife bereaved,
Back to our widowed arms received;
And all the joys which death did sever,
Given to us again for ever.

"O Lamb of God, by sorrow proved
The friend of man, the Christ beloved!
To Thee this sweetest hope we owe,
Which warms our shivering hearts below."

H. K. White.

CHAPTER XII.

JAMES'S DEATH.

AS soon as the illness of her father had appeared alarming, Mary had gone to Erlenbrunn to see the clergyman of the parish to which the Pine Farm belonged. She told him how ill her father was, and entreated that he would come to see him. The clergyman, a worthy

man and a good minister, visited him often, had much edifying conversation with him, and never left the farm without saying a few words of comfort and encouragement to Mary.

One afternoon when he came as usual, he found the good old man much weaker. James told Mary to leave the room for a little while, because he wished to speak with the clergyman alone. When after a short time she was again called into the room, her father said to her—"My dear Mary, I do not think I shall ever be able to be up again, and the clergyman has kindly promised to administer the Holy Communion to me to-morrow morning."

Mary had not thought her father in such great danger. She saw that he thought death approaching, and she could not restrain her tears. But by a great effort she recovered her composure.

"You are right, my dear father," said she. "What can we do better, when we are in trouble, than seek the comfort which God has promised to give in his holy ordinances?"

The rest of that day and most of the evening was spent by James in silent prayer: he spoke little, and seemed to be communing with his own heart. Next day he received the Communion from the hands of the minister with indescribable joy. Faith, love, and the hope of eternal life shone in his venerable countenance; tears of deep

emotion flowed over his withered cheeks. Mary, kneeling by his sick bed, wept and prayed. A small congregation had been formed in James's sick room. The farmer, his wife, and several of their workpeople joined in the holy service. All seemed deeply affected; some were moved even to tears.

"Now," said Mary, after it was all over, "my heart seems lighter, and I am much comforted. Truly both in life and death, religion is the support of the soul; in God alone can we find peace and comfort in affliction!"

James continued to get weaker every day, and he felt that death was slowly approaching. The farmer and his wife did everything in their power for him, for they regarded him as their best friend, and blessed the hour that he had come into the house. Many times every day, either one or other came into his little room to see how he was, and if he wanted anything. On these occasions, Mary's frequent question was, "Oh! don't you think that he may yet recover?"

Thinking it better to prepare her for the future, the farmer's wife once said to her—"My dear girl, I much fear that he will not survive the spring."

From that time Mary looked with fear and trembling from her little window into the garden. Hitherto she had always rejoiced in the return of spring. But now she looked sad when she saw the first delicate leaves appear

on the hedges, and the swelling buds on the trees; she dreaded the approach of spring, and the early song of the birds that she once loved so much caused her pain. The earliest snowdrops and primroses were an unwelcome sight. "Ah!" she said, "all around me is springing into new life; must my dear father alone die, while all seems reviving? Is there no hope for him? Yes," continued she, raising her eyes to heaven, "we are commanded not to sorrow 'as those that have no hope;' our Lord Jesus Christ has said, 'He that believeth in me shall not die.' He is merely putting off this earthly house of clay, to rise to a new and better life in heaven above!"

The pious old man often wished Mary to read aloud to him. She read with reverence and feeling, and her voice was sweet and clear. Towards the end of his illness, the passages he heard with most pleasure were the last words and the last prayer of our Lord Jesus.

One night Mary was watching silently beside him. The moon was shining into the little room through the window, so clear and bright that the feeble glimmer of the night-light could scarcely be seen.

"Mary," said her father, "read to me once more the beautiful prayer of our Lord."

She lighted a candle and read it.

"Now give me the book," said he, "and hold the candle for me a little."

Mary gave him the book, and held the lighted candle to him.

"See," said he, "this shall be my last prayer for you." He laid his finger on the place, and prayed in a broken voice, while he changed the words a little, so as to suit himself and his daughter,—

"Oh, heavenly Father! I have not long to remain in this world; but this, my child, will be left for a time in this world. I believe and trust that I am going to Thee, O Father! Thou Holy and Almighty God, preserve my child from sin and evil, for thy Name's sake. While I have been with her in this world, I have endeavoured in thy name and with thy strength to guard her from it. But now come I to Thee. I pray Thee not that Thou shouldest take her out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep her from the evil of it. I implore Thee to sanctify her through thy truth; thy word is truth. Oh, heavenly Father! grant that she, whom Thou hast given to me on earth, may one day come to meet me where I hope soon to be, with Thee in heaven. These things I ask in the name and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

While James prayed, Mary stood by his bedside, holding the candle in her trembling hand, and when he concluded, she joined in his earnest "amen," as well as her sobs would permit.

"Yes," continued her father, "my dear daughter, there shall we see Jesus in the glory which was given Him by God before the foundation of the world, and there in that better land we shall meet again."

He laid his head back on the pillow, and lay quiet for a little, grasping the book in his hand. It was a Bible, which he had bought with the first money that he had been able to save after he had been driven from Eichburg, deprived of everything he possessed.

"Dear Mary," said he, after resting for a little, "I thank you again for all the love which you have shown me during my last illness. You have well and faithfully kept the fifth commandment. Remember the promise given to those who love and honour their parents. I believe, dear Mary, that it will be fulfilled to you, and I trust God will provide for you, though I must leave you, to all outward appearance, poor and helpless. I can give you nothing but my blessing and this book. Trust in God, dear daughter, and this blessing will not be in vain. The blessing of a father who trusts in and pleads God's promises, is a greater blessing to good children than the richest inheritance. Take this book as your father's last gift. It cost only a few pence, yet if you will read it diligently, and follow its directions carefully, it is a greater treasure than gold or silver. If I could leave you as many pieces of gold as there are leaves on the trees in spring, you

could buy nothing better with all this money. For it is the Word of God, which has a power to make all happy who believe it. Our Lord says—'The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.' Read it every morning; try to find time for this amid all your toil and labour; even if you have time but for one text, learn it and meditate on it in your heart all day. If you do not quite understand any part of it, pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten you. I have always read it with prayer for this help. God alone can teach you rightly to understand it. All that is most essential in it is clear and simple to the understanding of all. Hold fast by it, follow it, and you will not be left without a blessing. A short text meditated on with prayer is full of wise teaching. These few words—'Consider the lilies of the field,' have taught me more wisdom than all the books which I read in my youth. The deep meaning contained in these words has been the source of many innocent enjoyments; and, amid many sorrows which would otherwise have filled my heart with anxious care, and made me faint-hearted and desponding, it has inspired me with a cheerful and happy spirit."

About three o'clock in the morning, James said, "I feel very ill, Mary. Open the window a little."

Mary opened it. The moon was no longer to be seen, but the stars were sparkling brilliantly in the dark sky.

"See how beautiful the sky is!" said James. "What are the fading flowers of earth, when compared with the unfading stars of heaven? I am going where nothing will ever fade or pass away. Oh, what joy! I am going to my Saviour! Keep close to Him, dear Mary, and so we shall meet again."

Saying these words, he sank back upon his bed, and he slept away gently and quietly. Mary thought it was only a swoon; she had never before seen death. No one had believed that her father's death was so near; but Mary was struck with a look she had never seen before—that once seen is never forgotten—and she hastened to awaken the people in the house. They quickly came into the chamber of death, and saw that James was gone. When Mary heard that he was really dead, she kissed his pale face, and embraced his cold remains, weeping bitterly.

"Oh, my good, good father!" said she, "I can now never reward you for all you have done for me. Oh, I can do no more for you! Thanks, thanks for all the kind words and precious advice that those pale lips have given me! With heartfelt gratitude I kiss the cold, stiff hand which has bestowed so many benefits upon me—has laboured so hard for me—has chastised me with such fatherly kindness in the days of my childhood! I now see, for the first time, how good it was for me! Oh, thanks, thanks, for all your goodness! Forgive me if I

have grieved you through my childish thoughtlessness! Oh, may God reward him for all his love to me! Oh God, let my death be like the death of this righteous man! How brief is this earthly life! How blessed that there is an eternal life in heaven!"

All present wept. At length the farmer's wife, by persuasion and entreaties, succeeded in inducing Mary to leave the room.

Mary would not be prevented from returning to sit beside the corpse of her father, where she read, and wept, and prayed until the morning dawned. Before the coffin was closed, she looked once more on the much-loved form.

"Ah!" said she, "do I look for the last time on this venerable face? How pleasant it looks, as if he were smiling; almost as if it were lighted up by the first rays of the future glory! Oh, farewell, farewell, my good father!" sobbed she. "I hope, I believe, that your spirit is now at rest in heaven!"

She had made a bouquet of rosemary, of golden primroses, and dark blue violets, and put it into the hand of the good gardener, who had sown and planted so many of them.

"These first blossoms of the newly-reviving earth will be an emblem of his speedy resurrection," said she; "and this ever-green rosemary an emblem of my constant and loving remembrance of him."

While they were nailing down the coffin, each stroke of the hammer seemed so deeply to pierce her heart, that she almost fainted away. The farmer's wife took her into another room, and entreated her to lie down for a little to rest.

Mary followed the funeral of her father in a deep mourning dress, which had been given her by a kind friend in the village. She was as white and pale as a corpse, and everyone pitied the poor orphan, who was now left alone without either father or mother.

As Mary's father was a stranger in Erlenbrunn, his grave was dug in a corner of the churchyard near the wall. It was overshadowed by two tall fir-trees. The clergyman gave a touching address to the people present, on these words of our Lord Jesus Christ—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." He spoke of the death unto sin, and the new life unto holiness, shown forth in the example of the worthy old man. He showed that each individual believer must die unto sin before he can rise to new life in heaven. He told them how meekly and patiently the good old man had borne his affliction, thus proving that he was bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, among which are meekness, patience, and long-suffering.

He said a few comforting words to the bereaved

orphan, and told her to remember that God is the Father of the fatherless. He thanked the kind-hearted people of the village for all their goodness to the departed, and entreated them to continue to be kind to the bereaved daughter, because, as he reminded them, Christians are especially called to visit the fatherless in their affliction.

Mary visited the much-hallowed grave whenever she went to church at Erlenbrunn, and as often as she could spare time in the evenings. There she wept and prayed. Homeless as she was, the grave that contained the dust of all she loved seemed like a home. She loved the quiet of the lonely churchyard. "Nowhere else," said she, "can I so well pray in peace. Here worldly things seem to disappear from my view, and I have a longing for my heavenly home." She never left the grave without making pious resolutions to live only for the glory of God, with the blessed hope that, believing in the same Saviour in whom they trusted, and following their holy footsteps, she might join her parents before the throne of God.

"Nay, shrink not from the word 'Farewell,'
As if 'twere friendship's final knell!
Such fears may prove but vain;
So changeful is life's fleeting day,
Where'er we sever, Hope may say,
'We part to meet again!'

"Ev'n the last parting earth can know
Brings not unutterable woe
To souls that heavenward soar;
For humble Faith, with steadfast eye,
Points to a brighter world on high,
Where hearts, that here at parting sigh,
May meet to part no more!"

BARTON.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE AVARICIOUS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

FROM the time of James's death Mary was constantly sad. All wore a gloomy look, as if the flowers had lost their fresh colours. The dark pine-trees round the farm seemed black and dismal, as if clothed in mourning. Time at length softened Mary's grief for

the loss of her father, but she had soon fresh sorrows to endure.

Great changes had taken place at the Pine Farm since the death of her father. The farmer and his wife had given up the farm to their only son, a good, quiet man, who had recently married a young woman who was rather pretty, and very rich for one in her station. She was governed by two ruling passions, vanity of her fancied beauty, and the love of money. Avarice and conceit had so stamped themselves upon her countenance, that her face, though pretty, wore a repulsive expression. Whatever she thought was agreeable and pleasant to her father and mother-in-law she was determined should not be done. When they gave up the farm, the old couple had stipulated that their son should provide for them for the rest of their days, but this contract was fulfilled by their daughter-in-law in the most penurious and niggardly manner. She annoyed them in a thousand ways, and seemed to grudge every morsel they ate. The good old people withdrew into the little back room that James had formerly occupied, and very seldom entered the front parlour.

The young husband fared no better. The shrew to whom he was married abused him in the coarsest terms numberless times a day, and continually taunted him with the large fortune she had brought him. If he did not

wish to pass the day in wrangling and strife, he was obliged to suffer in silence. She would not even permit him to hold any intercourse with his old parents, because she feared that he might find out how much she secretly oppressed them. It was only in the evening, after his work was over, that with a beating heart he ventured to go to see them. He generally found them seated together, mourning over the past, and he sat down with them, and confided his sorrows to them.

"Yes, yes," said the old farmer, "such is the way of the world. You, mother, were dazzled by the glitter of the gold, and you, my son, were caught by the rosy cheeks of your wife. I was to blame, because I yielded my better judgment too easily to your entreaties. We have all three been punished; we ought to have followed old James's advice. When this marriage was spoken of during his lifetime, the sagacious old man did not at all approve of it. I still remember his words, and have often thought of them since. Do you remember, mother, you once said, 'Ten thousand florins are worth having; it is a pretty sum of money.'? But James said, 'Don't call it a pretty sum. The flowers that you see from the window in the garden are a thousand times prettier. You should rather call it a heavy sum; for it is certain that it would need strong shoulders to carry it, without weighing down to the ground him who tries to carry it, and crippling his energies, and

making him a sordid, worldly-minded man. Why should you strive so earnestly for money? You have never as yet felt the need of it. You have always had what you wanted, and something over. Believe me, superfluity is no blessing; too much is as bad as too little. Useful and necessary as rain is, too much of it would destroy the healthiest plants in the garden.' As well as I can remember, these were James's words; I can almost fancy I hear him speaking. You, my son, once said, 'She is a beautiful creature, as blooming as a rose!' But prudent James replied, 'A flower is not merely beautiful, it must have some other good qualities united to its beauty. From flowers we receive many valuable gifts, such as rich perfume, pure wax, and the sweetest honey. A fair form without virtue is like a rose made of paper; it is very like the real flower, but it is a miserable, lifeless thing, without perfume and freshness, without wax or honey.' So spoke honest James, but we would not listen to him, and now we feel the effects of disregarding his counsel. This marriage, that we once esteemed so fortunate, we now see to be our greatest misfortune. May God grant us grace to bear this affliction patiently, for it cannot be helped now. What can't be cured, must be endured."

Thus the father, mother, and son, often conversed together in the little back room.

Poor Mary now fared very ill. As the old people occupied the little back room, she had been obliged to give it up to them; and though there were several good rooms unoccupied, yet, out of ill-will to Mary, the young farmer's wife put her into the worst room in the house, annoyed her in every imaginable way, and tormented her as no words can describe. The whole day there was strife. Mary could never work enough to please her hard task-mistress, and nothing that she did gave satisfaction. The poor orphan felt only too acutely that she was considered as an unwelcome intruder. The old people could afford hér no assistance; they could not even help themselves. She very often thought of leaving the place, and going elsewhere; but the puzzling question arose, whither could she go?

Mary asked the advice of the worthy clergyman. This excellent man said to her—"You cannot remain much longer at the Pine Farm, my good Mary. Your late estimable father gave you a superior education, and had you instructed in all that is necessary for the management of a household in the middle class; but at the Pine Farm they require from you the rough work of an uneducated peasant-girl. They overwhelm you with hard labour, which is beyond your strength and is not suitable for you. Notwithstanding, I do not advise you to start off at once, and wander at random about the world. I think that the

best thing you can do is to remain here at present, to work as much as you can without hurting your health, to pray, to trust in God, and to wait patiently till it pleases God to deliver you out of your troubles. He who caused you to be brought up in another circle will also be pleased to restore you to the circle which you were forced to leave. I will try to find a situation for you in a respectable Christian family. Pray without ceasing, and trust in God; He will preserve you in trial, and will make all things work together for your good."

Mary thanked the clergyman for his judicious advice, and promised to follow it.

Her father's grave was the dearest spot on earth to Mary. She had planted a rose-bush on it. "Ah!" said she, as she watered it with tears, "if I might be permitted to come often here, my tears would so moisten the ground that the rose-tree would always be green and flourishing."

The rose-tree was now adorned with green leaves, and the dark crimson buds began to open. "My father was right," said Mary, "when he said that human life was like a rose-tree. Sometimes it seems withered and bare, with nothing to be seen on it but thorns; but if we wait awhile, the time returns when it is clothed with fresh foliage, and covered with lovely roses. It is now my time of thorns, but I will be undismayed. I will believe your words, O my

good father! Perhaps your proverb will be fulfilled in my experience—'Patience will bring roses.'"

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take—
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour:
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

COWPER.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRESH TROUBLES.

THE fifteenth of July was wont to be a happy day to Mary, for it was the birthday of her beloved father. This year, when the morning sun shone bright and warm into her room, she greeted it with tears instead of smiles. In former times, she had been accustomed to prepare

some little pleasure for her father on this day; she gave him a present that she had privately prepared, cooked some dish that he liked, and tastefully adorned the table with flowers. She tried to find out whether she could not still show her love to him in some way. The country people in the neighbourhood were wont to adorn with flowers the graves of their beloved friends, especially on their birthdays. Mary knew this, for they had often asked her for flowers, which she always willingly gave to them. This gave her the idea of placing flowers on her father's grave.

The ill-fated basket, which had been the cause of all her misery, was standing in the room, and her eye fell upon it at the moment. She took it in her hand, filled it with the loveliest flowers and prettiest green leaves from the garden, set off for Erlenbrunn an hour sooner than the time for divine service, and placed the basket on her father's grave. Her tears dropped on the flowers, and glittered like dew on the fresh leaves. "My dear, good father," said she, "you strewed the pathway of my early life with flowers; I can never repay you for all your love and care. But I will at least adorn your grave with flowers!"

She left the basket standing on the grave; she was not afraid that anyone would take away either the flowers or the basket; the country people rather regarded it with

sorrowful reverence. They cordially blessed the good daughter, and sympathized in the respect she paid to the good father she had loved so much.

On the following day, while the farmer and his work-people were busied among the hay in a distant part of the farm, a piece of linen was missed, which had been laid out to bleach on the bleaching-green near the house. The young farmer's wife did not miss it till the evening, and as, like all avaricious people, she was very suspicious, she immediately blamed Mary. Honest James had made no secret of the story of the ring, and had confided all the circumstances connected with it to the old people. The son, who had thus become acquainted with it, thoughtlessly and most indiscreetly told the story to his wife. In the evening, when Mary, with a rake on her shoulder and an earthen pitcher in her hand, appeared in the house among the other servant-girls, the young farmer's wife met her in a furious rage, accosted her with the most insulting words, and told her to produce the piece of linen.

Mary modestly said, that it was impossible she could have taken the piece of linen, because she had been all day in the hayfield, along with the other work-people. She thought that while the farmer's wife had been cooking the dinner, some stranger might easily have carried off the linen. This had been really the case. But the farmer's

wife would not listen to reason, and screamed out in a fearful passion, "You thief! Do you think I don't know that you stole a ring, and narrowly escaped the sword of justice? Go out of my house this moment! I will not keep such as you under my roof!"

The young farmer said, "You will surely not send her away so late! The sun is already set! Let her have her supper this evening, since she has worked for us the whole day in the heat. Give her a bed, at least for this night."

"She shall not stay one hour!" screamed the virago, "and you had better hold your tongue, or I will stop your mouth for you in a way you won't like." The poor man saw that anything he could say would only make matters worse, therefore he was silent. Mary made no answer to the railing and passionate woman. She quietly packed up her few possessions, and took her little bundle under her arm. Before leaving the Pine Farm, she protested that she was innocent of the crime of which she had been accused, and begged to be permitted to bid farewell to the good old people, and thank them for all their kindness. "Certainly you may see them," said the young wife, with a sneer, "and if you would take them both with you, it would be doing me a favour. Death seems in no hurry to come for them."

The good old couple had heard the uproar, and were

weeping for Mary's sake. They kindly comforted her, and offered her all the money they had, which amounted only to a florin. "Go, dear child," said they, "and may God be with you! The blessing of your father will rest upon your head, and God will protect you. Remember us kindly; we are sure that all will go well with you."

Mary went away in the twilight, with her little bundle under her arm, and slowly ascended the narrow footpath that led across the wooded hills. She wished to visit her father's grave once more. When she came out of the wood, the evening bells were ringing in the village, and before she reached the churchyard it was dark. But she did not fear to wander among the graves at night; she went to the little grassy hillock which marked the spot where her father was buried, and there sat down to weep.

The full moon shone bright between the two dark pine-trees, and its pale beams lighted up the roses and the basket of flowers which still stood upon the grave. The evening breeze rustled gently in the branches of the pine-trees, and stirred the leaves of the rose-tree on the grave. This was the only movement, all else around was still and silent.

"My dear father!" said Mary. "Oh, that you yet lived, and that your poor Mary could tell you her griefs! Yet I ought not to say so; I ought rather to thank God that you are taken away from this new sorrow! You are where

neither sorrow nor suffering can ever reach you more! Would that I was with you! Ah, I was never so unhappy in my whole life before! Even when I saw the moon shining through the iron grating of my prison, I had the comfort of feeling that you, dearest father, were alive, feeling with me, and praying for me; but now the moon is shining on your grave. At the time when I was driven out from my home, I still had you with me, my true protector and friend. Now I have no friend left; poor, forsaken, suspected of being a thief when I am innocent, and a desolate stranger in a strange country, I have no home, and am alone in the world! I must leave even this little spot of earth, which seems to belong to me since you have been laid there; and the last comfort of weeping over your grave must now be taken away from me.

"Oh, gracious God!" said she, as, somewhat more composed, she sank upon her knees, "my kind heavenly Father, look down on a poor, forsaken orphan, who is weeping on the grave of her last earthly friend, and have pity on me! When our need is greatest, thy help is ever nearest. My grief could not be greater, and my heart is ready to burst with sorrow! Oh, show me that thine arm is not shortened that Thou canst not save. Make manifest thy mercy in saving me; forsake me not, for I have no friend but Thee! Oh, take me to thyself in heaven, where my good parents are! Oh, send me, I beseech Thee, a

little drop of comfort into my fainting heart! When the thirsty flowers are drooping and fading after the glowing heat of noonday, Thou sendest the refreshing dew to revive them in the cool moonlight! Oh, have pity—have pity on me!" Her hot tears flowed afresh down her cheeks.

"What shall I do?" said she, after thinking for a while, "and where shall I go? I am afraid to seek a shelter in any house at such a late hour! If I were to tell why I had been turned out, probably no one would like to take me in."

She looked around her. Near the wall of the churchyard, and close to her father's grave, there was an old moss-covered stone, and as the inscription had been long worn out, and it was in the way, it had been put on one side and used as a seat. "I will rest on this stone," said she, "and spend the night beside my father's grave. Perhaps I am here for the last time, and shall never see this precious grave again. In the morning, at break of day, I will go forth trusting in God, wherever his Providence may lead me."

"When gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark, and friends are few;
On Him I lean, who, not in vain,
Experienced every human pain;
He sees my griefs, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears.

"When mourning o'er some stone I bend,
Which covers all that was a friend,
And from his voice, his hand, his smile,
Divides me for a little while;
Thou, Saviour, mark'st the tears I shed,
For Thou didst weep o'er Lazarus dead.

"And oh! when I have safely past
Through every conflict but the last;
Still, still unchanging watch beside
My painful bed—for Thou hast died;
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tear away."

ROBERT GRANT.

CHAPTER XV.

HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

MARY sat down on the moss-covered stone, in the dark shadow of the overhanging fir-branches, and hid her face in her pocket-handkerchief, which was already wet with her tears. Her soul was deeply moved, and she prayed earnestly and fervently to God for help.

"Oh," sobbed she, "that God would send an angel to show me where I should go!"

She had sat thus some time, when she thought she heard a gentle voice calling her, "Mary, Mary!" She started up affrighted, and looked round. She clearly saw standing near her in the moonlight a fair and lovely form, with eyes beaming with heavenly kindness; cheeks of the most delicate pink, like an opening peach-blossom; flowing golden hair, falling in graceful curls on her shoulders; clothed in a light dress, as white as snow. Mary sank trembling on her knees before the figure, exclaiming, "Has God really sent an angel to help me?"

"Dear Mary," said the kind voice, "I am not an angel, but a human being like yourself, yet I have come to help you. God has heard your earnest prayer. Look at me. Is it possible that you do not remember me?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mary. "How is it possible that I did not know you at first? It is the Countess Amelia. How have you come here, my gracious lady?—here, in this desolate place, at this hour of the night, so many miles from your own home!"

The Countess Amelia gently raised Mary from the ground, folded her arms round her, kissed away her tears, and said, "Dear, good Mary, we have done you great injustice. You were ill-rewarded for the pleasure you gave me by the gift of the pretty basket. But your innocence

is now clear. Oh, can you forgive us?—will you forgive my parents and me? We will do all we can to atone for our cruel mistake, and make you forget all you have suffered. Do forgive us, dear Mary!"

"Oh! do not speak of forgiveness, gracious lady," said Mary, weeping. "Considering the circumstances, you dealt very gently with us. It never even came into my mind to cherish any evil feelings against you. I always thought with gratitude of your kindness. What gave me most pain was, that you, dear lady, and your kind parents, must have thought me wicked and ungrateful. I desired nothing more earnestly than that one day you should be convinced of my innocence. God has granted this earnest wish and prayer. Thanks be to Him!"

The Countess embraced Mary kindly, and bedewed her face with tears. Then she looked down at the grave at her feet, clasped her hands, and said, in a sorrowful voice, "Oh, worthy, excellent man, whose mortal form is lying here—whom I have known and loved from my earliest childhood—who made the first cradle in which I lay, and whose last gift to me, on my birthday, was this basket that is now standing on the grave—oh! would that you were yet alive, that I might see your face once more, and entreat your forgiveness for the injury which we unjustly did you! Oh, if we had but acted less rashly, and had more confidence in your long-tried fidelity, honest old

servant, perhaps your body would not now have been lying here—perhaps you would have been still alive and with us as you used to be! Oh, that I could have heard you forgive me! In the name of my parents, I here make a solemn vow at your grave, that the atonement that we can no longer make to you we will make doubly to your daughter. It shall be our care to make her happy. Oh, Mary, did your father forgive us?"

"My gracious lady," said Mary, "my father never felt the least resentment towards the family he had so much loved. He remembered them every day, in his morning and evening prayers, as he had been wont to do at Eichburg. He blessed them on his death-bed; and shortly before he died, he said to me, 'Mary, I firmly believe that the noble family at the castle will one day acknowledge your innocence, and recall you from banishment. If this should be the case, then tell the noble Count and gracious Countess, and that angel, the Lady Amelia, whom I have often carried in my arms when she was a child, that to my last hour my heart was full of veneration, love, and gratitude towards them.' I assure you, gracious Countess, that these were his very words."

On hearing these words, the Lady Amelia could not restrain her tears. At length she said, "Come, Mary, let us sit down a little on this stone. I cannot leave the grave till I tell you how God has made manifest your innocence,

and how earnestly we desire to atone to you for all you have suffered."

"The hours of pain have yielded good,
Which prosp'rous days refused;
As herbs, though scentless when entire,
Spread fragrance when they're bruised.

"The oak strikes deeper as its boughs
By furious blasts are driven;
So life's vicissitudes the more
Have fixed my heart in heaven.

"All-gracious Lord! where'er my lot
In other times may be,
I'll welcome still the heaviest grief
That brings me near to Thee."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COUNTESS AMELIA'S STORY.

"GOD is surely with you, dear Mary," said the Countess Amelia, while she sat down beside Mary on the stone. "I have been brought here in a wonderful way to help you. I must tell you how it happened. It seems all quite simple and natural, yet in the chain of little

circumstances which have resulted in bringing me here, we may trace the over-ruling hand of Divine Providence.

"From the time when your innocence was discovered I could not rest. You and your father were ever present to my thoughts. Believe me, dear Mary, I shed many tears on your account. My parents caused search to be made everywhere for you, but we could not obtain any intelligence as to where you were. Three days ago, I came with my father and mother to a hunting-lodge belonging to the Prince, not far from the village. It had not been inhabited for twenty years, except by a forester put in to take care of it. You know that my father is the keeper of the royal forests, and he has lately had some disputes to settle about the boundaries. He has been all day engaged with two other noblemen, who are concerned in the affair. My mother has been obliged to entertain their wives and daughters. I am glad that she did not require my assistance, as I do not like these formal parties. After the hot day we have had, the evening was so cool and pleasant, the sunset so lovely, the hills around, with their picturesque cliffs appearing between the dark pine-trees, formed so charming a picture, and so enchanted me, that I begged my mother's permission to take a short walk. I was accompanied by the daughter of the forester.

"We passed through the village; the gate of the churchyard stood open. The grave-stones were gilded by the

rays of the setting sun. From my childhood I have always had a fancy for reading the inscriptions on tomb-stones. I am much moved when I read that a youth or a maiden has been cut off in the bloom of life; and I feel a kind of melancholy pleasure when I find that an old man or woman has reached a very advanced age. Even the rhymes, although their meaning is generally better than their composition, have often suggested to me many good ideas, and taught me many a useful lesson. We therefore went into the churchyard.

"After I had read many of the inscriptions, the forester's daughter said to me, 'Now I will show you something really beautiful. It is the grave of a poor man, on which there is neither tomb-stone nor inscription, but which has been decked with flowers by his daughter, who fondly loved him. Do you see under the dark shade of yonder pine-trees a rose-tree covered with roses, and a pretty basket of flowers placed on the grave?'

"I went to the place, and stood petrified with astonishment! At the first glance I recognized the basket, which had been frequently in my thoughts since you left Eichburg. I examined it more closely; it was certainly the same,—the initials of my name and the crest of my family left no room for doubt. I questioned the forester's daughter about you and your father. She told me that you had been living at the Pine Farm, and related to me

some particulars of your father's last illness, and of your deep affliction at his death. I hastened to the parsonage, to see the clergyman who visited your father. I found him a very kind and worthy man. He confirmed all that I had been told, and said much in your praise. I wished to go immediately to the Pine Farm; but while I was conversing with the clergyman the time passed so quickly that it was already dark.

"'What is to be done?' said I. 'It is certainly too late to visit the farm to-night, and to-morrow at break of day we are to leave this neighbourhood.'

"Then the clergyman sent for the schoolmaster, and asked him if he would kindly go to the farm and bring you to the parsonage.

"'Mary, poor desolate girl!' said the schoolmaster, 'I need not go so far to fetch her. She is in the churchyard, weeping and mourning over her father's grave. Poor child! I fear that she will lose her senses through grief. I saw her through an opening in the church-tower, when, after the ringing of the evening bell, I went to wind up the clock, that if possible I might keep the old machinery going, at least, as long as the noble family remain at the lodge.'

"The clergyman wished to accompany me to your father's grave, but I begged him to allow me to go alone, that I might speak to you freely, without witnesses. I

earnestly entreated him to be so kind as to go to my parents, who might be anxious about me, and tell them where I am, and prepare them to see you return with me. You see now, dear Mary, how it was that I appeared to you so suddenly. By the interposition of Providence, the basket has been the means of reuniting us at your father's grave."

"Yes," said Mary, clasping her hands, and looking up thankfully to heaven, "God has done it all. He has had compassion on my tears, and has heard my prayers in my most extreme need. Oh, how graciously, how lovingly has He dealt with me! Some say, indeed, that God does not now send angels to succour those in suffering. But I know from experience that He still sends angels—noble souls, full of compassion and kindly feeling, who, like the Countess Amelia, take an active part in relieving the distressed. God sends messengers such as these, and guides their footsteps at the right time to the very place in which they are needed, and where their presence gives comfort and joy, as if an angel had appeared."

Amelia here interrupted Mary, and said, "I have yet one more circumstance to tell you, dear friend, respecting this story, which I have felt very deeply, and which has inspired me with reverence and awe for the holy providence of God, who overrules all that we do when we are least thinking of it. Harriet, the greatest enemy whom

you have on earth, had been plotting and contriving how to deprive you of my love, with the hope of getting into greater favour herself. On this account she invented the wicked falsehood she told, and her malicious plot seemed for a time to be completely successful. But in the end, as you shall hear, this very falsehood was the cause of her losing her place and our confidence for ever, and of making you still dearer to our hearts. She sought to separate you for ever from me; she exulted in your banishment for life; in the last outbreak of her wickedness and malice, she threw the basket that you had given me at your feet, with a mocking smile; but it was exactly this malicious action—little as she could have thought it at the time—which was the cause of uniting us again, for it was by means of the basket that I have found you here. Is it not true that no enemy can injure those who love God? for God overrules for the lasting good of his people all the evil that wicked people try to inflict upon them, and so that while our worst enemies are striving to injure us, and plotting our destruction, they are actually working for our good against their will. That good comes out of evil, is a certain truth.

"But now that I have told you all this," continued the Countess, "will you now tell me, dear Mary, why you came to the grave at so late an hour, and wherefore you were weeping so very bitterly?"

Mary related the circumstances of her unjust dismissal from the farm.

"Oh!" said the Countess, in surprise, "this is another wonderful instance of God's providence. When you were in the deepest need, and in sore distress were imploring help from God, He answered your prayers by guiding my steps to this spot at the right moment. Here you see a fresh proof that God brings good out of evil. When the wicked farmer's wife turned you out of her house, as she thought, to suffer misery and want, she little imagined that her cruelty would be the means of guiding you to me and my good parents, who will do their best to make you happy.

"But now," continued Amelia, "it is time that we should go home. My parents are expecting me. Come with me, dear Mary; I shall not willingly part with you again, and to-morrow you shall go with us to Eichburg."

Mary could not help feeling a pang at the thought that she might perhaps never see her father's grave again. She lingered as if unable to leave the place. The Countess gently took her by the arm, saying kindly, "Come away, dear Mary, and bring the basket of flowers with you; it will be a lasting remembrance of your good old father. Instead of the basket of flowers with which your filial love has adorned his grave, we shall order a more lasting monument to be erected. You shall come back and see

it, but come away in the meantime. I am sure that you must be anxious to hear how the ring was found, and on the way I shall tell you all about it."

They left the churchyard arm in arm, and wended their way towards the old castle in the soft moonlight.

"Dear as thou wert, and justly dear,
We will not weep for thee;
One thought shall check the starting tear,
It is that thou art free.
And thus shall Faith's consoling power
The tears of love restrain;
Oh! who that saw thy parting hour,
Could wish thee here again!

"Triumphant in thy closing eye,
The hope of glory shone;
Joy breathed in thy expiring sigh,
To think the fight was won.
Gently the passing spirit fled,
Sustained by grace Divine—
Oh! may such grace on me be shed,
And make my end like thine!"

DALE.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RING FOUND.

THE way to the castle led through an avenue of tall old lime-trees. After the Lady Amelia and Mary had walked together along this road for a little way in silence, overcome by varying emotions, the young Countess said—

"I must now tell you how the ring was found. This year we went earlier in the season than we used to do to the castle of Eichburg, because business obliged my father to be there. It was about the beginning of March. When we arrived the weather was pleasant for the season, but it soon changed, and during one night in particular there was a terrible storm of wind and rain. Do you remember the very tall pear-tree in the garden at Eichburg? You know it was very old, and scarcely bore any fruit; on that stormy night it had been so bent and broken by the wind that it seemed ready to fall; my father therefore ordered it to be cut down. All the servants were called out to help to hold the ropes, to prevent its destroying the other trees in its fall. My father and mother, my brothers and I, and, indeed, almost all in the castle, went into the garden to look on.

"When the tree had fallen with a great crash, my two little brothers rushed to seize a magpie's nest which was near the top of the tree, and had long excited their youthful curiosity, though they had never been able to reach it. They now examined it with the greatest eagerness. 'Look, Albert!' said Augustus, 'what can it be that is sparkling so brightly among the interwoven twigs?' 'It is sparkling like gold and precious stones,' replied Albert. Harriet, always inquisitive, came forward to look, and uttered a loud cry. 'The ring!' exclaimed she,

becoming as pale as death. The boys pulled out the ring from the nest, and carried it to my mother in great glee.

"'Yes, it is indeed my lost ring,' said she. 'Oh, good, honest James, poor Mary, what injustice we have done you! I am very glad that the ring is found, but I would now be much more glad if I could find James and Mary. With what joy would I give the ring, and much more, to atone for the injustice we have done them!'

"'But how was it possible,' asked I, 'that the ring could be carried into the birds' nest, at the very top of the tree?'

"'I can soon explain that to you, my lady,' said the old forester, Anthony, while tears of joy stood in his eyes at thus seeing your innocence proved. 'It is clear that neither the old gardener James, nor his daughter Mary, could have hid the ring there. The nest was too high and the branches too weak for anybody to have reached it by climbing the tree. Besides, there was not time to have done it. Immediately after Mary reached home after leaving the castle, both she and her father were imprisoned. But the magpies who had their nest in this tree are well known to like anything bright and glittering. Whenever they can steal anything shining, they carry it to their nest. Doubtless one of these thievish birds has stolen the ring. I am only surprised that an old forester

such as I am did not think of this sooner. But it must have been the will of God to send this great trial to my old friend James and his daughter Mary.'

"My mother said, 'You are perfectly right, Anthony, and the whole matter is now quite clear to me. I distinctly remember that the birds were often accustomed to alight on the window-sill from the top of the high pear-tree; that at the time when the ring disappeared the window was open; that the little table on which I put the ring was close to the window; and that I had closed the door of my room, while I was in the ante-room adjoining for some time. It is, therefore, certain that one of these sharp-eyed birds had seen the ring sparkling on the table, and while I was in the adjoining room had stolen it unperceived, and carried it to its nest.'

"My father was much troubled and distressed when he so unexpectedly received the full proof that you and your father had been innocently condemned. 'It pains me to the very heart,' said he, 'that we should have done such gross injustice to those good people, and my only comfort is that it has not been done wilfully, but through ignorance and by acting on false information. I will never lay my head quietly on my pillow till I have found those worthy people, have restored them to the position they deserve to hold, have acquitted them of all blame, and

atoned to them, so far as it is in my power, for the injustice they have suffered.'

"He then turned to Harriet, who was standing, pale and trembling like a condemned criminal, amid the joyful group which surrounded us.

"'False and deceitful serpent!' said he, 'how could you venture so to deceive your mistress, to perjure yourself before the court of justice, and to commit such a fearful sin? How could you find it in your heart to treat a respectable old man and his innocent child in so cruel a manner, and plunge them into such undeserved misfortune? Take her into custody at once,' said he to two constables who had chanced to be present at the cutting down of the tree, and had since hovered round Harriet like hawks, watching for a signal from my father to seize their prey. 'Let the same chains be put upon her,' said he, 'with which Mary was loaded, let her be cast into the same dungeon in which Mary languished. She shall receive the full number of stripes which were inflicted unjustly on Mary; all the money she has saved and everything she has must be confiscated and given to those whom she has injured; and lastly, she shall be banished from the province, and conducted to the boundaries by the same police-officer who accompanied James and Mary.'

"All present stood silent, frightened, and amazed, for

no one had ever seen my father so excited, or heard him speak so angrily. But when he went into the castle the silence was broken, and they all began to make their remarks on what had happened.

"'It serves you right,' said one of the police-officers to Harriet, as he took her arm. 'Those who dig a pit for others, often fall into it themselves.'

"'You see what comes of lying and perjury,' said the other police-officer, also taking hold of her. 'The proverb is true, "There is no thread so finely spun but it may be seen in the sunlight."'

"The cook said, 'See how one fault leads to another! Harriet's jealousy of Mary, and her envy about the pretty dress that was given her, led her to tell a lie, and when she had once done this, she found it impossible to draw back, and she was led on to perjury. It is a true proverb, "If we give the devil a single hair to hold by, he will lead us to destruction."'

"'Well,' said the coachman, who had helped to cut down the tree, and had still the axe upon his shoulder, 'we must hope that, at least, she will now repent, or it will be the worse for her in another world. "The tree that bringeth not forth good fruit,"' added he, swinging the axe round him, '"must be hewn down, and cast into the fire."'

"The report that the ring had been found, was soon

spread through Eichburg, and crowds of people came flocking to ascertain the truth. Among them came also the magistrate. He had heard something of it from his clerk, and had hastened at once to the castle. You can scarcely imagine, dear Mary, how deeply grieved he was when he heard the story, and knew that you had been unjustly condemned; for however severe he may have appeared to you, he is a strictly just man, and has prided himself all his life on his upright dealing.

"'I would give the half—nay, the whole of my fortune,' said he, in a voice that went to the hearts of all present, 'that this had not happened! It is terrible to have condemned an innocent person unjustly.' He looked round the circle of people who had now assembled, and addressed them in a loud and solemn tone. 'God is the only Judge who never errs,' said he, 'and whom no one can deceive. He, the Omniscient, alone knew who was really guilty; no human being knew what had become of the ring, or where it had remained until now. Human judges easily err, for man is but short-sighted, and cannot read the heart. Here on earth innocence must often suffer, and guilt seems for a time to be victorious. God, who will one day reveal the secrets of all hearts, has in this case been pleased, even in this world, to clear the innocent and punish the guilty. See, and acknowledge how wonderfully all the circumstances have combined

together to work out his holy will. The stormy wind which last night shook the castle, and made us all tremble, beat the old tree till it seemed ready to fall, then a heavy shower washed the birds' nest clean, so that the ring sparkled and attracted attention. Then it was so ordered that the Count and his family were at the castle at the time, so as to be present when the tree was cut down; the ring was first discovered by the frolicsome boys, who would never once think of concealing what they had found; and Harriet, the false accuser, was the first to declare Mary's innocence by the piercing cry she uttered when she saw the ring. If we would carefully observe the course of events, we should find that such providential occurrences take place oftener than we imagine. On the Great Day, when God himself shall judge the world, He will give to every man according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad, life or death. Yet sometimes, even in this present world, He so orders events as to reward the innocent and punish the guilty, that men may not forget that the Lord reigneth, and that amid the many unrighteous things that are done on earth, they may not lose their belief in an eternal, unfailing, almighty Power, ruling all things in righteousness.'

"The magistrate spoke impressively, and the people listened with great attention, agreed that he was right, and

dispersed quietly. So now, dear Mary, I have told you the whole story about the finding of the ring."

By this time Amelia and Mary had reached the gate of the old castle.

"Trust God to govern all!
No king can rule like Him:
How wilt thou wonder, when
Thine eyes no more are dim,
To see these paths which vex thee,
How wise they were and meet;
The works which now perplex thee,
How beautiful, complete!"

PAUL GERHARDT.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VIRTUE REWARDED.

THE Count, the Countess, and visitors staying at the lodge, were assembled in the principal drawing-room, furnished, according to the fashion of the times, in great magnificence. The walls, hung with rich tapestry, represented scenes taken from the chase. Hunters, huntsmen,

horses, dogs, reindeer and wild boar, were each so vividly and life-like depicted, as at the first glance almost to delude one into the fancy that they were treading upon magic hunting-ground.

The worthy clergyman was still interesting the assembled party in the stirring incidents in the lives of Mary and her father. He praised the filial obedience of Mary, whose piety, patience, and modesty led her to the fulfilment of those duties which were now about to be so signally rewarded; and he dwelt long on the noble feelings which actuated her good old father, never to forget, notwithstanding the untoward circumstances in which he and his daughter were placed, the duty and honour due to the noble family whom they had once served.

At this moment the young Countess Amelia entered the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, leading Mary by the one hand, and holding the basket of flowers in the other.

The Count graciously came forward to receive Mary. "My poor child," said he, as he looked at her pale, care-worn face, "come, that we may welcome you amongst us again. We will make you forget the grief and sorrow you have suffered; and the little cottage which your father rented shall not only be yours from this moment, but the garden shall be the prettiest in the village, and my daughter, who loves you dearly, shall have the happiness

of handing both the one and the other formally over to you to-morrow."

The Countess approached, kissed Mary, and led her to the couch on which she had been previously sitting. Taking Mary's hand in her own, the Countess said soothingly, as she looked down on the ring on her finger, "Innocence and virtue are gems of priceless worth, even as this precious diamond in the centre of this ring. Although rich in the one treasure, despise not the other, my child, but accept this ring in remembrance of the restitution I desire to make, as a pledge of my maternal care of you for the future. Accept it to-day, as a jewel of priceless worth. Should the time, however, come when its intrinsic value may be more useful to you, come to me, when I will redeem it at double its value."

Mary's feelings completely overcame her, and tears of emotion prevented her giving utterance to the deep-felt gratitude stirring within her.

One of the guests, noticing such to be the case, came forward, and in a friendly way patting Mary on the head, said, "Accept the ring offered to you with such generosity. It has pleased God to bless the noble Count and the amiable Countess not only with wealth, but with hearts capable of bestowing bounties."

"Say not bounty," replied the Countess, "not bounty, but justice. To our sorrow and deep regret, we committed

an act of most cruel injustice, that we can never sufficiently atone for; merit we cannot lay claim to, we are simply fulfilling an act of justice."

Mary, with tears in her eyes, still held the ring, and, as she looked at the good kind minister, her face bedewed with tears, she seemed silently to implore that aid which she did not venture to ask.

"Accept the ring, Mary," he replied; "it is the wish of the Count and the Countess. As this circumstance has afforded an instance of how apparently the most circumstantial evidence may lead to error, in the same way let this unusual way of compensating for error remain a bright example in your memory of how noble hearts seek to expiate faults they have unwittingly committed. It has graciously pleased God, my child, thus to reward you for your filial love and duty to your parents, in leading the Count and Countess to compensate for your former sufferings. Accept, then, their rich gift, and as you have hitherto showed yourself pious, gentle, and patient in affliction, there remains now but to evince your gratitude to the Almighty, and continue that modest and becoming demeanour which is the true adornment of virtue."

Mary hesitated no longer, placed the ring on her finger, and gently kissed the hand of the generous Countess, but she could not speak for tears.

The young Countess Amelia, standing with her basket

of flowers, was a silent spectator of the whole, her face radiant with joy at the generous way in which Mary was welcomed by her parents. The minister took in the full meaning of the whole scene, and silently offered his prayer that the Count and Countess might have their goodness to this poor orphan child repaid in the devotion and unselfishness of their own daughter. Though it may sometimes appear to us that we do not always meet with our just reward in this world, let us however bear in mind that precious gifts are bestowed upon us, and that it becomes our duty so to act as good stewards, prompt' to give an account of our stewardship.

"The heart unaltered in its mood,
That joys alone in doing good;
The joys within such heart that burn,
No loss can quench, nor time o'erturn!
The stars may from their orbits bend,
The mountains rock, the heavens rend,
The sun's last ember cool and quiver,
But Virtue still shall glow for ever."

HOGG.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN EVENING AT THE HUNTING-LODGE.

SUPPER being announced, the Countess graciously invited the clergyman to remain, Mary also being of the party. As was the custom in those days, the clergyman said grace before supper.

Poor Mary's feelings almost overcame her, as she

breathed her prayer of gratitude to the Almighty, contrasting the present sumptuous banquet with the recollection of those days spent at Pine Farm, when the poor girl, after her hard day's work in the fields, had not unfrequently been obliged to go supperless to bed. Her prayer implored forgiveness for ever having distrusted the providence of God, and entreated grace to trust Him for the future.

The Countess observed Mary's shyness in taking her seat at table; but, actuated by the noble feelings which prompted her to an act of justice, she felt as though Mary were conferring the favour in being seated beside her at table.

The supper was pleasant to all present. Even old Anthony experienced joy at seeing Mary re-established in favour, and was pleased to wait upon her. He felt as though he would willingly at that moment have given up years of his own life for Mary's poor old father, the honoured friend of his youth, to be present at that evening supper. But we must not confine our views to wishes for this life only, for this world is but a probationary state for the world to come—the preparation for an after and a better life in heaven. It was sad to think the poor old man had not witnessed the public testimony to his daughter's innocence, but it would be wrong to wish to recall him, after having passed the great boundary of this

world's suffering here below. And however great and complete may be atonement in this world, what is it as compared to the joys of those realms of bliss prepared for those whose hopes are fixed on a world beyond the fleeting joys of an hour?

Before leaving the table, the good clergyman expressed a wish to relate a little incident that occurred previously to James's death.

"One morning," he continued, "I went to attend his bedside as usual, and was surprised at the calmness, if not cheerfulness, expressed on my poor friend's countenance. In reply to my look of astonishment, he remarked—'I have not slept very well; but I have prayed, prayed long and earnestly, and I feel at peace concerning my child. I have faith in the belief that my prayer will be heard. I have trusted my child to the Almighty, and I feel as though her innocence would yet be made known—perhaps not till long after I am gone—and, who knows? perhaps even by the friends who have so long condemned us.' On referring afterwards to dates, I found that the night James spent in fervent prayer was the very night of that violent storm which shook the pear-tree, and consequently led to the discovery of the ring, previously to Mary's innocence being established. God hears our prayers, and even answers them whilst we are asking, although we,

in our ignorance, do not see the answer vouchsafed to us.

"This little anecdote ought to convince us that God, who has implanted the tenderest feelings of love in the hearts of parents, experiences towards his creatures a more boundless love, and a more tender watchfulness, surpassing that of any earthly parent. Neither wealth, nor honour, nor position, can prevail against this belief, which is our only comfort in the hour of tribulation and death."

The good minister then rose to depart. The Countess, holding out her hand, begged that they might adjourn to the library, and that he, their good minister, would not depart without asking God's blessing upon the assembled household, thanking Him for the goodness of the past day. He gladly consented, and after an impressive prayer, the party separated for the night.

"O Christian! afflicted with wave upon wave,
Whom no man can comfort, whom no man can save,
With darkness surrounded, by terrors dismayed,
In toiling and rowing thy strength is decayed.

"'O fearful, O faithless!' the Saviour cries,
'My promise, my truth, are they light in thine eyes?'
Still, still I am with thee, and faithful to keep,
Though seeming, amid the rough tempest, to sleep.'

"O Saviour! we trust Thee, our life is secure;
Thy wisdom is perfect, supreme is thy power;
In love Thou correctest, our souls to refine,
To make us at length in thy likeness to shine.

"The foolish, the fearful, the weak are thy care;
The helpless, the hopeless, Thou hearest their prayer;
From all our afflictions thy glory shall spring,
The deeper our sorrows, the louder we'll sing."

J. GRANT.

CHAPTER XX.

A VISIT TO THE PINE-TREE FARM.

EARLY next morning all in the castle were astir, busily preparing for their intended departure; but not any of them took so much interest in Mary as the kind Countess Amelia and the young foreign friend who was then staying with her.

Mary, who had formerly dressed as became her station at Eichburg, after she was settled at the Pine Farm had adopted the dress worn by the villagers, rather than attract attention by affecting a superiority in appearance as contrasted with her companions. The young Countess Amelia perceiving this, suggested to her friend, who was about Mary's height and size, that she should give Mary one of her dresses until a suitable wardrobe should be prepared for her.

This was accordingly agreed to, and Mary was told to put on the pretty new dress belonging to the Countess Amelia's friend.

Mary would gladly have remained in her modest village attire, and it required some gentle persuasion on the part of the Countess to induce her to make the change.

"Come, come," she said, "let me see you in your new dress; from this time you will be my friend and my companion, and you must not any longer be dressed as a peasant-girl. Better begin at once to change your style of dress, as it will cause less observation than doing so later."

Mary could not do otherwise than consent, after which the two young ladies kindly descended with her to the breakfast-room.

At the first glance every one was astonished at seeing three young ladies enter the room, but on perceiving that

Mary was one of them, their astonishment was speedily changed into congratulation on her improved appearance.

Immediately after breakfast the carriage was ordered, and the whole party set off with the utmost gaiety for Pine Farm, Mary having her seat beside the amiable Countess Amelia, opposite the Count and Countess.

The Count made many kind inquiries of Mary about the old people at the farm, and finding they had nothing very comforting to look forward to as they advanced in years, he resolved to judge for himself as to how he might best improve their circumstances.

When the carraige drove up to the farm, never before had so grand an equipage appeared at the modest little homestead.

The young farmer's wife, eager to welcome such noble visitors, was as cringing in her attentions as she was tyrannical to those under her. Officiously putting out her hand to assist one of the ladies, she was ready to drop with rage and envy on recognizing Mary to be the lady whose dress she had so carefully protected from the wheel of the carriage.

Forgetful of her assumed good manners, she rushed away, fearing they had come to punish her for her former cruelty towards Mary.

The Count perceiving the old farmer busily employed

in his garden, went to speak to him, accompanied by the Countess and the Lady Amelia.

In reply to their thanks for his goodness to Mary and her father, the honest farmer warmly replied, that the obligation was not due to him, but to Mary's father himself, adding—

"He brought a blessing under my roof, and had I but more faithfully followed his advice, I should now be better off than I am. Since his death, this garden is my only friend. I have to thank him even for the little plot of ground I now hold, for it was he who led me to cultivate it. I am grown too old to work at the plough, and amongst my plants and my flowers I seek for the quiet and repose which is denied me within doors."

In the meanwhile, Mary had found the good old farmer's wife, and was gently persuading her to come forward, and not be afraid of her kind friends.

The poor woman, who had never been in the presence of such company before, approached trembling and shy, whilst the Count and Countess received her with cordiality, and overwhelmed her with kindness.

The poor old couple could not refrain from weeping with joy; and turning to Mary, the farmer affectionately remarked, that he always said Mary's dutiful love to her father would bring a blessing with it, and now he rejoiced to see his words coming to pass.

His wife, taking courage on hearing her husband, added, as she touched Mary's pretty dress—

"Yes, yes; and I, too, remember her father's favourite saying, that 'He who clothes the lilies of the field will also clothe us.'"

The young farmer's wife still held back, overwhelmed with envy and rage.

"Well, well," she muttered to herself, "to think that this wretched little beggar-girl should be converted into a fine lady! What next, I wonder? Now she will be too grand to associate with us; still, we all know who she is, and that she was glad to carry her bundle and beg from door to door!"

Although the Count could hear nothing of the mutterings, the expression of her face sufficed to show what was passing within; so, after a few moments' consideration, the Count said to the farmer—

"My good friend, I have an offer to make, which I think will please you. As Mary will remain with us, and as, at any rate, she is too young to live by herself in the cottage rented by her father, and which I have lately given to her, what do you say to living there yourself, with your good, worthy wife? It is a pretty little spot, and I think I may venture to say that Mary will gladly see you living upon it rent-free. The garden is still there which Mary's father cultivated, and there live many at Eichburg who,

remembering his good counsels, will be glad to talk of your worthy friend."

The Countess, the Lady Amelia, and Mary urged the old man to accept the offer of the Count.

But little persuasion was needed to leave a home rendered so unhappy by the repeated quarrels of their daughter-in-law.

Daily they sadly experienced the full force of the proverb, that "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house." (Prov. xxv. 24.)

Great was their joy at the prospect of a quiet and peaceable home.

The daughter-in-law rejoiced too, although from very different feelings, and she hastened to inform her husband of the circumstances, as he had now returned from his day's work in the fields. However reluctantly he might part with his worthy parents, he could not but rejoice at the prospect of their future quiet home.

In his gratitude in seeing his parents comfortably settled, he said, as he turned to his wife—

"Did I not always tell you that a kind act towards a poor but virtuous fellow-being brings happiness and a blessing into one's home? You did not believe me—now you are convinced."

His ill-tempered wife, crimson with repressed rage, said

nothing, but glancing savagely at her husband, did her best to conceal her feelings from the others present.

Soon after, the Count promised to send for the old folks so soon as they could be comfortably received at Eichburg; and the party, once more taking their seats in the carriage, drove swiftly away.

"Shall mortal man--a child of earth,
Who yesterday received his birth
From God's all-bounteous hand,—
Shall *he*, while sojourning below,
Presume th' Almighty's plans to know,
His ways to understand?

"His wisdom, infinite and vast,
Shall through eternal ages last,
Unchangeably the same;
While in the dreary shades of hell,
His justice so inflexible,
Proclaims his awful name.

"Ah, then, suppress each rising sigh,
Nor dare to ask th' Almighty why,
Or what his hands perform;
Submit to His all-wise decrees,
Whose power can calm the raging seas,
Or raise them to a storm!"

RAFFLES.

CHAPTER XXI.

FURTHER OCCURRENCES AT PINE FARM.

THE noble Count kept his promise. Before autumn was over, a conveyance was sent for the worthy old couple, to take them to their comfortable new home at Eichburg. Their son shed many sad tears on parting with his parents, whereas the step-daughter, who had counted

the days and hours till their departure, could scarcely contain herself for joy, when at last the day of departure arrived.

But such joy was not without alloy. Before leaving, the coachman handed her a legal notice from the Count, ordering her husband to pay regularly every quarter into the nearest bank, under penalty of a fine, the value of board and maintenance with which her husband was bound by his agreement on taking the farm to supply his parents, and which sum was estimated at a very high rate. In vain she stormed, declaring they were worse off than before, and that they could keep the old couple at one-half what they had to pay. The son, not daring openly to brave his wife's anger, inwardly rejoiced at still having to contribute to the comfort and support of his parents.

They left the following day, in the conveyance provided for them by the Count. The son bade them farewell with tears in his eyes, whilst the wicked daughter-in-law was unfeeling to the last. But such conduct brings its own punishment sooner or later, and the avarice which made her grudge a home to her husband's worthy parents, was soon to be signally avenged. Instead of following her husband's advice, and investing her money safely at a moderate rate of interest, she insisted on risking the whole in the hands of a speculator, simply because he promised

her a higher rate of interest. For awhile all went well, and the interest being paid regularly, she never supposed that the capital was in jeopardy. Happy in her fancied security, she never ceased calculating how much she could accumulate in the course of the next ten or twenty years; but the day came when her covetousness was to bring its own bitter retribution. The speculation failed, and the speculator himself was declared bankrupt. Here was a blow too heavy for this woman to bear. As the sole object of her life had been the hoarding of money, now that she saw it swept from her, her one aim was to persecute the man who had so ill advised her, and the little money that was left she spent in consulting with lawyers and men of business, eager only to punish the man who had ruined her. Her despair and rage at last combined to bring on a violent fever. Her husband wished to send for the doctor, which she surlily rejected, saying, "What good can he do me, when he did nothing for old James?" She secretly sent for some cheap medicine from a miserable impostor lately arrived in the village, thinking thereby to save a few shillings; in the meantime her husband had himself gone for the doctor, and in her rage at his having done so, she threw the medicine the doctor had sent her, untasted, out of the window.

The good clergyman of Erlenbrunn came to see her during her illness, and did all in his power to lead her

thoughts from dwelling on earthly things only, and to repent and turn to God whom she had forsaken. But his kind counsels only irritated her the more. "I cannot make out," she would say to the neighbours, "what the clergyman means by preaching to me as he does. It would be fair enough to speak in that way to the man who has robbed me; but as to me, I have nothing to repent of—on the contrary, I expected him to praise me. Every Sunday I attend his church, my daily prayers are never left unsaid, and throughout my life I have worked and saved as a thrifty housewife ought to do; no one can say a word against me, why then should he?"

The worthy clergyman, seeing that his words were of no avail, felt himself compelled to speak even more plainly than he had yet done. He dwelt long on the two great commandments of the law, love to God and love to our neighbour. He showed her especially that love of money was still her ruling passion, and that the violence of her anger, the cruel treatment of the poor orphan who had been under her roof, her undutiful conduct towards her husband's worthy parents, whom she ought to have treated as her own, all proceeded from that avarice which was her besetting sin, and which was not to be mistaken for economy or thriftiness. That the violence of her temper caused her husband endless unhappiness, and that the duties of charity were not encompassed in the mere giving

of our superfluities only. That however incumbent upon us it was to attend the church regularly, with feelings such as hers, church-worship alone availed but little. He reminded her of the story of the pharisee and the publican, entreating her to pray to God as a sinful woman needing pardon, and to ask God's forgiveness in the true spirit of the publican.

But the unhappy woman could hear no more; she raved wildly at the clergyman's exhortation, saying, what had she done to be spoken to in that way; that everyone was against her, even to the clergyman, from whom she had expected comfort.

Depressed and grieved, the good clergyman took leave of her for the present. "When the love of money once takes possession of the heart," thought he, "how true it is that money alone cannot ensure happiness! The poor rejected orphan Mary has spent happier hours in this garden beside her pious and good father, than all the wealth could bring to this hardened woman."

She had still much physical suffering to endure. Her cough became more severe, and her weakness increased daily, yet her avarice prevented her taking the necessary nourishment she needed. She had neither patience to endure nor resignation to submit to the will of God. The good clergyman spared no trouble in his efforts to bring her to repentance. Towards the end she appeared less

violent, and expressed sorrow at her former misconduct. She died shortly afterwards, in the prime of life, a sad victim to avarice, and a melancholy example that riches alone will not suffice to happiness, but, on the contrary, a misdirected use of them will not unfrequently lead to misery and ruin.

"The sinner's doom—the sinner's doom—
How dark the agony
That haunts transgression to the tomb,
Then prays on endlessness to come,
Whose worm may never die!"

CHAPTER XXII.

RETRIBUTION.

MARY accompanied the Count's family to their residence in town. One morning she was surprised on being told that an old clergyman wished to speak to her. She found him in the drawing-room, and he told her that he came from a person dangerously ill, whom he believed

to be dying, and who earnestly wished to see her before her death. Mary was astonished at this announcement, and went to the Countess for advice. The Countess knew the clergyman, and giving orders for a servant to accompany Mary, she consented to her going to see the sick person.

Mary had some distance to go, until they arrived at an out-of-the-way part of the town. At last they came to a dingy little lane, where the clergyman stopped at a very high house. Here she had to go up five stories high, the last two flights being so narrow and dark that Mary was quite frightened. At last the clergyman opened an old door just nailed together out of odd planks of wood, and then showed her into a room the very picture of want and misery. The broken window was stuffed up with paper; a miserable bedstead with a still more wretched bed, if such it could be called, a broken stool, and a pitcher without a handle filled with water.

But the most pitiful object of all was the poor creature stretched on the bed of sickness. Her voice was hollow and rough, and she was so emaciated that she appeared rather a skeleton than a living being. Mary trembled from head to foot. It was at length with difficulty that she understood from the hollow voice that this poor object lying before her was indeed Harriet—

Harriet, who had formerly served at the castle, when bright and blooming as a spring flower. The unhappy woman had learnt from the clergyman of Mary's return to the Count's family, and, struck with remorse, she was anxious to relate the true story of the ring, and entreat her forgivenesss. She feared to let Mary know who she was until she came, trembling lest Mary would refuse to come to her.

Mary was deeply affected, and bursting into tears, assured her again and again that all was forgiven, and that her only feeling towards her was that of sincere and sympathizing compassion. Harriet was too unhappy to believe herself forgiven, and entreated Mary to let her be a warning to others, reproaching herself that her vanity, folly, and love of dress should have led to so much misery and sin.

"I am too sinful for pardon," she exclaimed, "and do not deserve it. I have brought all this misery upon myself. My only thoughts were on finery, flattery, and pleasures—the beginning of all my sorrows, and which have led me to what you see me. I would not turn to God. I would not listen to good, so that I should cease to hear the voice of conscience. Oh, what shall I do to be saved?" she groaned. "I have lost all in this world, and I dare not hope for the future."

Mary implored her to seek repentance from God by

prayer, reminding her of the returning prodigal; but despair seemed to have seized on Harriet, and all she could say was, "Oh, Mary, noble-minded Mary !—pray for me, that God, too, may forgive me."

Harriet, on being dismissed from the castle, thought she would live in the town. Without friends to advise, and already stung by remorse at her misdeeds, she fell deeper and deeper into the slough of sin and vice. The good old minister in his district visitations found her out, and touched by her bitter remorse, had promised to try to obtain Mary's forgiveness. She stayed with Harriet a long time, saying all she could to soothe and comfort her; but at last, fearing the Countess might be surprised at her long absence, she took leave of Harriet to return to the castle.

It was long before she could forget the sight she had just witnessed. She gratefully called to mind her own father's good counsel, and thanked God that she had hitherto been brought up to eschew evil. She earnestly entreated the Countess in behalf of Harriet, who at her intercession kindly sent a supply of clean linen, of nourishing food, and all that the unfortunate woman required. But beyond alleviating present suffering, it was too late for kindness to save her. At three-and-twenty she died, a melancholy warning to those who stray from the path of rectitude and virtue.

"Love not the world—the hour is near
Of parting and of pain;
Oh! what will then the world appear,
With all its thoughtless train?

"Ah! then, when all is passed away
Of pleasure's fatal glare—
When death asserts his dreadful sway,
How will the spirit fare?

"Alas! if in that hour of woe
No beam of light be given,
The spirit to that place will go,
Where none can be forgiven."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HAPPY EVENT.

THE following spring, when the country was once more resplendent with verdure and flowers, Mary again found herself in her accustomed seat in the carriage by the Countess Amelia's side, in company with the Count and Countess, on their way to Eichburg. They arrived

about sunset. Mary was not unmoved as she recognized each remembered spot in succession. "Ah," thought she, as the tears were not to be repressed, "how little, when I left Eichburg, did I ever expect to return to it, and still less with the dear kind Countess by my side! How can I thank God for all his goodness to me!"

When the carriage stopped at the door of the castle, the old servants as well as the work-people on the Count's estate were drawn up to receive the family in due honour. Everyone present welcomed Mary, and some even ventured to congratulate her on her return of fortune. The old judge took her tenderly by the hand, begged her forgiveness, adding, that his greatest hope was to lead her in time to forget the wrong he had unwittingly inflicted upon her.

Mary arose early the following day. The beautiful spring morning, and joy at finding herself at the spot she loved so well, had disinclined her to sleep. She longed to look at her father's cottage again. Early as it was, she met many well-remembered friends of former days, and others whom she left as children, and to whom she had formerly given flowers, so grown that she was puzzled to make it out.

The good old couple, the farmer and his wife, those who had afforded her shelter at the Pine-tree Farm, met her at the door, welcomed her gladly, telling her in the

gratefulness of their hearts of their content and happiness in their new home.

"Once upon a time," said the farmer, with tears in his eyes, "you were homeless and we gave you shelter, and afterwards, as we were driven from our homes, you have provided one for us."

"Yes, yes," added the wife; "it is always right to do good one to the other, for we never can tell what may happen to ourselves."

"That is true," answered the husband, "only that we never thought of that. So true it is—'Be merciful, and ye shall obtain mercy.'"

Mary went into the house, the parlour, the corner where her father used to sit, calling to mind days long gone by. She walked thoughtfully round the garden. Each tree her father had planted she welcomed as an old friend; especially she lingered over the beautiful apple-tree, now laden with blossom.

"Ah!" thought she, "the trees and the grass of the field outlive man's transitory life. It passes as a vapour."

Last of all, she seated herself in the arbour, where so many of her father's precious lessons had been given. She shed tears at these recollections, and breathed a prayer where she had so often knelt beside her father, until it appeared almost hallowed ground; she then took leave of

the good farmer and his wife, and returned with a calm and grateful spirit to the castle.

Mary remained as companion to the young Countess Amelia, each spring returning with the Count's family, as was their custom, to spend some few weeks at Eichburg. She never ceased taking interest in the village children, and the Countess Amelia not unfrequently accompanied her in her visits, doing much good among the poor, visiting the schools, and sometimes making articles of clothing for the smaller children. One morning, whilst busily finishing off a little frock at which they were both working, they were surprised at hearing the old judge announced. He seemed to look more important than usual, and after bowing to the Countess Amelia, begged for a few minutes' conversation alone with Mary. The young Countess looked somewhat surprised, but immediately left the room. The judge then told Mary that he came on behalf of his son Frederic, who had long loved and admired her, and having been fortunate in obtaining a good appointment, and his love for Mary being approved by the judge, he himself wished to obtain Mary's sanction to his son's proposal, and at the same time to have the renewed assurance that she freely forgave him for the wrong he had formerly inflicted. He added, that as soon as his son had spoken to him on the subject, he had offered to come up to the castle, and by Mary's

permission would speak to the Count and Countess on the subject.

Mary blushed deeper and deeper, not knowing exactly how to reply. The fact was, Mary knew the judge's son to be a worthy young man, who had distinguished himself at college, and was well spoken of everywhere. He was handsome and agreeable, and during their repeated visits to Eichburg, Mary had frequent opportunities of not only seeing him, but hearing the opinion of others respecting him. Mary had already suspected that he cared for her, and she even had herself thought that she could be very happy with him; but her modesty forbade her to anticipate so good a marriage, and rather than encourage hopes that might not be realized, she avoided all opportunities of meeting Frederic, as she had done once or twice in the garden. Although this proposal made to her by the judge was the choice of her heart, she found it impossible to reply. She hesitated, and, deeply blushing, said that she was unprepared to reply to so flattering a proposal, but begged for a little time for consideration, and that she must speak to the Count and Countess, who deserved her first consideration.

The sharp-sighted old judge, seeing Mary's agitation, guessed how matters stood, and taking leave of her, requested an audience of the Count and Countess.

The Count said, "I am delighted at the news you

bring us, my friend. We have often thought that your excellent son Frederic and our amiable Mary were well adapted for each other. We were careful, however, to conceal our wishes in this respect, fearing it might be looked upon as a sort of obligation, and it is better never to interfere in such matters. It is therefore the more agreeable to see the affair brought about without our interference."

The Countess added her congratulations and good wishes, telling the judge he would have the best of daughters-in-law, and his son the best of wives. "Mary," she continued, "has been brought up in the school of early trials, the best of all schools. The best of us have little corners to be knocked off, and this is best done by patience and suffering. Mary is meek and lowly of heart. Flattery has never spoiled her; she is modest and generous in her nature, gentle and pious. She was an admirable housekeeper, and a kind and agreeable companion, before she came to us. She has since shared the advantages of education with my daughter; you will now find her ladylike and accomplished as well as amiable and good. In every respect she is worthy of your son; he will be happy in possessing such a wife."

As soon as the Countess had Mary's consent to the marriage, she commenced making the necessary arrangements. The *trousseau* was ordered, a liberal marriage-

portion was settled upon Mary, and the good clergyman from Erlenbrunn was to officiate at the marriage. The Countess seemed to wish Mary to wear the ring—the one that had caused so much sorrow and so much joy—next to her wedding-ring.

The wedding-day was one of great rejoicing, such an one as had never been seen in Eichburg. At the appointed time, the whole of the Count's household and a large crowd assembled, all eager to be witness to Mary's happiness. The bride looked pretty in her white wreath and veil, whilst the Countess Amelia was the most graceful of bridesmaids. The old forester Anthony stood not far from the bride and bridegroom, rejoicing at the good fortune of his little favourite, the daughter of his good old friend.

The wedding breakfast was all that could be desired. In the centre of the table, instead of the usual silver epergne, was the basket, which the Countess Amelia had filled with flowers, and had placed on the table. The good clergyman alluded to it in his speech after breakfast, suggesting that Mary should keep it as a precious heirloom, as a memorial of her trials and of her blessings.

"Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that hast survived the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpaired and pure,
Or tasting, long enjoy thee! too infirm,

Or too incautious, to preserve thy sweets,
Unmixed with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup.
Thou art the nurse of Virtue; in thine arms
She smiles, appearing, as in truth she is,
Heaven-born, and destined to the skies again.
Thou art not known where Pleasure is adored,
For thou art meek and constant, hating change,
And finding in the calm of truth-tried love
Joys that her stormy raptures never yield."

COWPER.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MONUMENT.

IN the meanwhile, the monument was finished which the Countess Amelia had promised Mary should be erected at her father's grave. It was very simple and very beautiful. It was of white marble, and the name and age of the good old man were inscribed upon it in

letters of gold. The only additional inscription was these words of the Lord Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Beneath these words was sculptured in bas-relief the flower-basket, by means of which it had pleased God to deliver Mary from her sorrow at her father's grave. Under the basket were these words: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." (1 Pet. i. 24, 25.)

The minister of Erlenbrunn gave directions for erecting the monument at the grave. It had an imposing effect amongst the dark shadows of the fir-trees, and the rose-tree planted by Mary grew and flourished, twining its beautiful branches over the pure white marble. The monument was the greatest ornament in the country churchyard, and the chief attraction in the village. The good clergyman never failed to point it out to the visitors who came to the village. When one or other approved the idea of a man who had been a gardener and a basket-maker having a basket of flowers upon his grave, the worthy clergyman replied, "It is more than simply a good idea. The flower-basket has a still deeper meaning, and the peasantry are right in saying it relates to a very touching story. This earth on which we live is often

moistened with tears.". He then related the story of the flower-basket to his interested listeners, the greater part of whom left the grave with such impressions and resolves, that nothing more could be desired than that the same impressions and resolves may be experienced by the reader on finishing this little book.

"There is a secret in the ways of God
With his own children, which none others know,
That sweetens all He does; and if such peace,
While under his afflicting hand, we find,
What will it be to see Him as He is,
And, past the reach of all that now disturbs
The tranquil soul's repose, to contemplate,
In retrospect unclouded, all the means
By which his wisdom has prepared his saints
For the vast weight of glory which remains!
Come then, Affliction, if my Father bids,
And be my frowning friend: a friend that frowns,
Is better than a smiling enemy.
We welcome clouds which bring the former rain,
Though they the present prospect blacken round,
And shade the beauties of the opening year,
That, by their stores enriched, the earth may yield
A fruitful summer, and a plenteous crop."

SWAINE.

THE END.

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